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ABSTRACT

This volume presents 12 papers on the role and teaching of religious studies at the undergraduate level in public universities. The first set of six papers all address the nature of religious studies as a discipline. In particular they address the changing view of this discipline which for its short period of existence (30 to 35 years) has often been disdained by those who believe its subject matter presumes personal commitments that compromise the integrity of disciplinary methodology. The papers are: (1) "Teaching Religious Studies: A Personal Reflection" (Bradley Starr); (2) "Is Religious Studies 'Religious?'" (Harry Wells); (3) "Some Reflections on the Teaching of Religious Studies" (Edward Hughes); (4) "The Study of Religions: One Field, Many Methods" (Gary Kessler); (5) "The Methodological Pluralism of the Academic Study of Religion: A Note for Our Colleagues" (Willard Johnson); and (6) "Why Secular Universities Need Religious Studies" (Benjamin Hubbard). The second set of papers examine teaching and include: (7) "Capturing the Captivated: The Teacher as Impersonator" (Kenneth P. Kramer); and (8) "The University: Newman's and Ours" (Daniel Brown). A group of papers on related fields include: (9) "Are We Ready for Integration Yet?" (Jean Graybeal); (10) "Jewish Studies in Multiculturalism" (Jody Myers); and (11) "Two Ambiguities in Teaching (About) Religion in California's Public Schools" (John Hatfield). The final paper is a book review by Jean Graybeal of the volume "Teaching the Introductory Course in Religious Studies: A Sourcebook" (Mark Juergensmeyer, Ed.). (Five papers cite references.) (JB)

California State University Studies in Religion
Supported by California State University Institute for Teaching and Learning

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Presence and Promise

Religious Studies in the University

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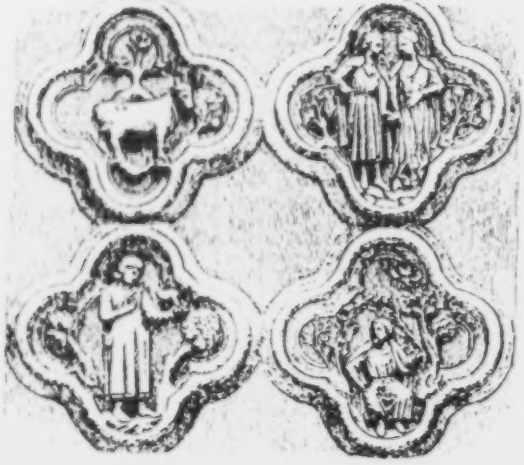
Presence *and* Promise



Presence *and* Promise

Religious Studies in the University

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John Hatfield
CSPU Pomona

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April 1992

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Introduction

he papers collected here come directly or indirectly from two sessions of the religious studies seminar sponsored by California State University's Institute for Teaching and Learning. The first session met in April 1991 during the fourth of a series of discipline seminars representing some twenty academic disciplines in the CSU system. The second session was held in late February 1992, at an all-university conference, "The Teaching and Learning Exchange: Celebrating 30 Years of Commitment to Teaching in the California State University."

All of the papers in this volume address questions of teaching and learning religious studies in a public university system whose mandate is the education of undergraduate students. They are by faculty who teach undergraduate religious studies courses in that university. That is to say, the faculty who contributed to this volume take as their primary responsibility teaching undergraduates in a four-year university. At the same time, they are scholars who contribute to the various intellectual branches of the field of religion through their research and

writing. As a consequence of this two-fold professional commitment, the authors are in an ideal position to assess teaching and learning religious studies and, in particular, to do that in the context of a public, tax-supported university.

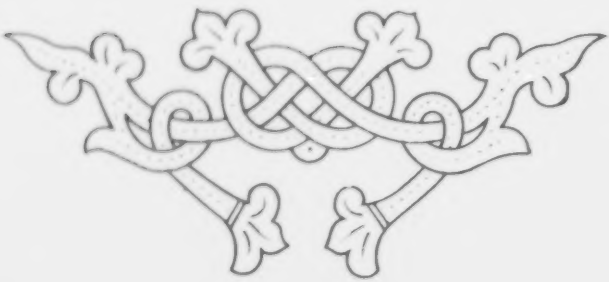
Religious studies is a relatively new field of knowledge. From its beginning, some thirty to thirty-five years ago, religious studies has held a marginal position in the university. It has been treated with polite disdain, if not neglect, by those who believe its subject matter presumes personal commitments that compromise the integrity of disciplinary methodology. That view is changing, and it is the intention of this volume to highlight the change. The *presence* and contribution of religious studies as an academic area of study in the secular university bespeaks a long and complex history that includes reflections by its practitioners on methodology, scope, relation to other disciplines, and purpose. The *promise* of religious studies is to enhance teaching and learning by celebrating its own subject matter and, through that celebration, help the university reflect on its principles and purposes.

Religious studies is no less, and no more, an academic discipline or area of study than linguistics, economics, ethnic studies, or biology. Just as these disciplines honor the integrity and particularity of their subject, so religious studies takes seriously the claims of its subject areas, neither reducing them to nonreligious categories (such as history or culture) nor advocating the truth of a single religious tradition or belief. In addition, as general education and its fragmentation continues to be a concern in American life, as the question of the canon and issues of multiculturalism come to the fore, and as the distinction between fact and value breaks down, religious studies is in a position to make its voice heard along with other disciplines. That voice is

calling for a deeper search into the roots and principles of teaching and learning. The subject matter of religion does not domesticate itself easily within established categories of academic disciplines. This fact reminds us that teaching and learning are in the service of life, are ever tentative, forever renewing, and not fixed in a determinate pedagogy. The critique that religious studies offers the university opens teaching and learning to the wonders of life itself, to the unexpected, the inexplicable, the inexhaustible, in the presence of which we can only stand humbly and carefully observant.

The themes of the two seminars from which these papers are drawn illustrate the range of our concerns and establish the scope of the present volume. At the first seminar, we looked at what a major in religious studies should include; how our field can facilitate incorporation of religion into the curriculum of the public schools in California; what is the importance in general education of the introductory course in religious studies, and what are effective approaches to teaching it; what is the contribution of religious studies to liberal learning and the general purposes of the university; and how does the designation of our field ("religious studies," "religion studies," "comparative religion") affect its perception by those outside the field. At the second seminar, we were interested in reviewing preliminary results of a questionnaire that will throw light on how religious studies is perceived by students, and what outcomes we can expect from the introductory course. We also heard presentations on immigrant experiences (students and their families) as resources in world religions courses; religious studies perspectives on multiculturalism; integrating women into the religious studies curriculum; and a follow-up on religion in the public schools. Not all these themes are presented in this collection. Those not discussed await future publication.

The Nature of Religious Studies



Teaching Religious Studies: *A Personal Reflection*

Bradley Starr
Religious Studies Department, CSU Fullerton

I have no statistical evidence to offer for this thesis. But considering personal experience as well as conversations with many friends and colleagues over the years, I suspect that a small but significant number of religious studies professors in undergraduate institutions are men and women who, like me, were raised in religiously conservative environments from which they have been converted. They begin their studies of religion with naively creative beliefs—perhaps only half-true—that their former religious views somehow account for a vast number of personal and social shortcomings. Armed with a sense of mission, they undertake historical, sociological, psychological, anthropological, phenomenological, or philosophical studies of religion largely in order (1) to expel once and for all the authoritarian ghosts of their personal religious pasts; (2) to determine if they can retain anything to fill the

religious or quasi-religious unrest which they seem unable to shake, and which may be all that remains of their upbringing; and (3) to take revenge by "liberating" others from the clutches of authoritarian religion and its allegedly dire consequences.

I confess that I feel surprised, amused, and perhaps at times dismayed when colleagues and students simply assume that I am a theologian, minister, or believer in one of the religious systems I present in class.

Ironically, in the classroom these ends can easily translate into a condescending, elitist, and authoritarian disposition which both mirrors the religious coercion they fled and interferes with the tasks of teaching in religious studies. Purged of this disposition, however, such a personal background can lay the foundation for a teaching stance in the discipline that well suits the CSU system. Such professors are able (1) to understand and respect religious believers, beliefs, and practices for their own sake, to sympathize with them, and yet (2) to retain a powerful and healthy sense of irony, fascination, and astonishment at even the most familiar developments in particular religions, all the while (3) infusing their teaching with a personally felt grasp of the seriousness of religious questions.

As a professor from this background, I confess that I feel surprised, amused, and perhaps at times dismayed when colleagues and students simply assume that I am a theologian, minister, or believer in one of the religious systems I present in class. I came of age academically

under the influence of the work of Max Weber. Reading his studies of religion left me euphoric over the possibilities of my chosen field. To me, Weber was far more than just a "founder of sociology." His profound and sophisticated grasp of the theological subtleties and religious practices, experiences, hopes, and anxieties of the people he studied showed me a way to make a new nontheological use of my own studies in theology and religious experience. His insights into the world-creating paradoxes of religion in human history, and his respect for religious commitment as he diagnosed its prospects within the wider predicaments facing modern industrialized western Europe—these strands in his work energized me with the sense that religious studies was the discipline where the most intriguing human questions and predicaments could be studied, where one could truly educate and be educated.

But above all, Weber's ethical and methodological stance struck me as a kind of emancipation proclamation. Its message to me was: You owe it to your students and to yourself to distinguish between facts and their relevance to values on the one hand, and value judgments on the other. Socrates was wrong. Knowledge is not virtue. Knowledge is only a necessary condition for the virtue of assuming responsiblity for one's life and world. The intrusion of scientific expertise into the sphere of value judgments robs both student and professor of this moment of personal and

Socrates was wrong. Knowledge is not virtue. Knowledge is only a necessary condition for the virtue of assuming responsiblity for one's life and world.

corporate responsibility, and hidden professorial agendas to that effect are evils even when they seem to serve the best of ends.

Given the welcome stipulation that religion and the state must be separated in our public education system, professors of religious studies in the CSU system find that they must take special care in matters such as these. Though there may be other ways to make the separation, I find Weber's message personally congenial. Marx once remarked that even though human beings are the makers of their own history, they do not make it as they please, since they find themselves living "under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." What primarily interests me is the way religious experiences, theologies, and movements create profoundly powerful and compelling world images which, in the words of Weber, "like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed." I want students to understand these world images, to feel the power in the deep metaphysical claims that human beings have made upon the universe. Ignorance of this aspect of life leaves us with a simplified understanding of human beings, their actions, and their histories. We are rendered ill-equipped to understand the shape our world has taken and can take in the future. But inculcation in my students of any religious perspective, whether a religious exclusivism or the most benign religious or theological pluralism, is of no pedagogical interest

I want students to understand these world images, to feel the power in the deep metaphysical claims that human beings have made upon the universe.

to me. Understanding religious images of the world and being religious are quite separate matters. The former can be accomplished without the latter, and that is my aim.

Hence, for me, the ideal classroom situation is one in which creative disorientation and wonder are aroused in students by a professor who, after a semester of mutually accurate and often moving portrayals of incompatible religious options, steadfastly declines to lend professorial weight to any particular religious stance. To refrain from announcing one's own religious commitments—or lack thereof—is to be able to shift one's advocacy easily within the classroom for maximum pedagogical effect. Students are challenged with, and gain thereby (as do I), a more profound and critical understanding of their own and the world's complexity. Their lives have been complicated, but they have not been indoctrinated. They have been required to learn what may be for them uncomfortable facts about history and the workaday world, about conveniently "forgotten" people, events, and conflicts, about their own or other people's religious world images. My basic aim is that students—devout or irreligious, liberal or fundamentalist, right or left; whether majoring in business, communications, political science, or education—will allow themselves to be jarred by information as they make their own choices regarding how to relate themselves to their widened world.

Understanding religious images of the world and being religious are quite separate matters.

This approach to teaching religion may well be one of the unique "products" the CSU system has to offer. As a state institution, we are constitutionally obliged to separate theologizing from the studying of religion. Theology may be studied here, but not done. How religion is to be approached in this peculiar context should be a matter of methodological and pedagogical scrutiny, experimentation, and creativity. Naturally, student and teacher alike may find themselves concerned to place what they have learned into the web of often contradictory beliefs and institutions within which each of us must try to bring some sort of unity to our lives. Regarding the student, this arena is one into which I have no right to intrude. I cannot attempt to steer the impact of the knowledge the student gains into a channel I find personally, theologically, or politically congenial. But I can present a range of options and models, and these should include ones which I cannot myself adopt. I can and should help students understand these options and clarify for themselves the implications of their choices. There may be some occasions where, for illustrative purposes, speaking of my own values to a student may be helpful toward this end, though this must be done very carefully in order to insure that the student recognizes the important boundary our discussion has crossed. But when it comes to their values and their decisions, one must respect and guard the autonomy of one's students. From whatever personal background one might have come, this stance seems to me to be the only

I cannot attempt to steer the impact of the knowledge the student gains into a channel I find personally, theologically, or politically congenial.

pedagogically appropriate one for professors of religious studies within the CSU setting.

Bibliographical Note: Weber's methodological writings may be found in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, edited and translated by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York: The Free Press, 1949); and "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited and translated by H.H. Gerth and C.Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 129-56. The "switchmen" passage is also in From Max Weber, p. 280. The Marx passage is from his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, taken from Karl Marx, *The Essential Marx*, edited and translated by Saul K.Padover (New York: Mentor, 1978), p. 234.

Is Religious Studies *Religious?*

Harry Wells
Religious Studies Department, Humboldt State University

religious studies department? On *our* campus? Shudders and chills run up and down the spine as specters of confessional bigotry or violations of "church and state" flood into one's consciousness. We scholars in religious studies find that perhaps more than any other field, our disciplines bring reactions based on personal prejudices. Recently at the California State University Institute for Teaching and Learning, over twenty-five participants representing sixteen CSU campuses which offer courses in religious studies discussed the possible need to change our name from *religious* studies to something else, mainly because of confusion over what persons perceive as *religious*. Though some of my colleagues felt strongly that a change was needed, others felt that a name change would not erase the personal prejudices that color collegial impressions. Calling ourselves a religion department, religious studies

department, department of religious studies, or department of the study of religion would probably change little the preconceived notions of others. Rather, letting others know who we are seems the appropriate task.

. . . religious studies does recognize its unique position, however, for its study embraces a phenomenon which includes an incredible spectrum of human experience.

So, is religious studies *religious*? If one assumes that "religious" is the advocacy of a particular religious expression, then religious studies is not religious. If one assumes that "religious" is merely emotional or irrational responses, then religious studies is not religious. If one assumes that "religious" matters are solely a personal matter, unable to be observed with various critical methodologies, then religious studies is not religious. But if by "religious" one connotes the study of the phenomenon of religion which takes seriously the full spectrum of that phenomenon, then religious studies is religious, just as the study of biology is biological studies.

In making the above claim, religious studies does recognize its unique position, however, for its study embraces a phenomenon which includes an incredible spectrum of human experience. That spectrum is both its blessing and its curse as a formal discipline in the academic setting, for religious studies is inherently interdisciplinary, multiethnic, and open to a variety of methodologies. This is its blessing, making itself a vital asset to the university. At the same time, it takes seriously the limitations of any single methodology or discipline in approaching

the question of *religio*, i.e., a quality of living and a way of being which seeks to "bind together" human life. Because the phenomenon of religion professes human transformation into wholeness (defined in a variety of ways), so must the study of it take seriously the experience of living such a human existence and all that entails—our myths and stories, our concepts and doctrines, our analytical skills and our non-rational apprehensions, our rituals and ceremonies, our art forms, our emotions, and historical developments, along with the experiences of intuitive insight which we experience as a-historical. Religion deals with all of these things, both in their many healthy and unhealthy combinations, and, as such, religious studies takes seriously the human endeavor to *be*.

Roger Corless has said that Buddhism is "transformation translated into information." I would extend that to any major religious tradition, with religious studies being the discipline which studies the information while always recognizing that what lies ever so slippery within that translation is the human quest for transformation. If religious studies scholars are to be true to the phenomenon they study (and is not that the responsibility of any scholar?), then they have to take seriously what the phenomenon says about itself. So, though religious studies could never advocate or impose a religious life onto anyone, it takes seriously the phenomenon of living religiously. It empathetically communicates and rigorously critiques what the religious traditions say about life. To do less would not be sound scholarship or in keeping with the integrity of university study.

. . . religious studies takes seriously the human endeavor to be

Chemists take chemistry seriously, and approach their discipline with categories of chemical analysis. Religionists take religion seriously and approach their discipline with categories appropriate to religious analysis. To ask religious studies to use only categories other than those in which religion expresses itself would be to have double standards between disciplines, yet often religious studies is asked to do just that. We take seriously certain categories which other disciplines do not examine, and move in distinct directions beyond our interfaces with other disciplines, but we do not do so uncritically, any more than a sociologist, physicist, historian, or musician would do so.

Religionists take religion seriously and approach their discipline with categories appropriate to religious analysis.

At the same time, religious studies is necessarily irreducible to any single approach or methodology. This is our curse as an academic discipline, for the university has become ever more a place of distinct disciplines with methodologies which grant information, but often only that information which can be reduced to its specific methodology and approach. Because of its scope, therefore, religious studies will always be a "thorn in the side" of the modern university. The pain we give to the university is actually the same function any pain gives—it is a reminder that something is not functioning right. The pain we send the institution by our presence is a similar pain sent when we educators are called to accept multicultural and multiethnic perspectives in our educational process. It is a reminder that our disciplines are templates based on specific assumptions for specific information, and when put all together, they

still fail to give us a whole picture.

So the thorn of being who we are is also an indicator of some of the most important contributions we have to offer the university as it tries to grow back into being an interdisciplinary institution rather than the pluraversity which it has become. Religious studies is inherently interdisciplinary, actively interfacing with a broad range of other human activities—politics, psychology, psychotherapy, the arts, the media, economics, *and* the natural sciences. Even so, religious studies recognizes that its phenomenon claims its own distinctions in this interface, so interface can never be equation. Though historical-critical methods of study are important approaches in religious studies, the predominantly phenomenological approach to our subject is a key contribution to the university. We seek to listen to the full range of human religious expressions, including our myths, ceremonies, customs, conceptual systems and doctrines, and our religio-socio-economic systems which both express and contradict our quest for wholeness, for humanness. We take seriously this existential quest, both as a personal and as a corporate task in which the human race engages. We are also keenly aware of the multivalent nature of religious experience of reality to which the religions attest and which they exemplify. Our discipline as a study of this richness is as uncomfortable as any

Religious studies is inherently interdisciplinary, actively interfacing with a broad range of other human activities—politics, psychology, psychotherapy, the arts, the media, economics, and ***the natural sciences.***

other discipline when it cannot corner its subject with its method(s). As an academic discipline, whose function is to limit in order to describe, we do so with a variety of approaches and methodologies. Yet, as a discipline whose subject matter, like life itself, refuses to submit fully to our templates, we are a constant reminder to ourselves and our colleagues of the limitations of models and paradigms. Finally, our empathetic approach requires learning to cross over into other perspectives and stances, which is a necessity for persons to learn as we live in increasingly pluralistic societies.

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Religious studies as a discipline within the university has much to offer as it stands in creative tension with that institution. I vote for retaining the name *religious* studies, as an adjectival modifier, for that more accurately captures the fluid creativity of the discipline's focus—the *religio* of human existence, the quest(s) of learning how to be at home in, of embracing, the cosmos. So the next time you become curious about the nature of *religious* studies, visit the classroom of your religious studies colleague or go to lunch together. You probably will not find a raving revivalist, or a levitating guru, or a cold academician bound by a tunnel vision discipline. Rather, you might find both a serious scholar and an engaging person.

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Some Reflections on the Teaching of Religious Studies

Edward Hughes

Religious Studies Department, CSU Long Beach

understand the role of an educator under three headings: socratic, traditional, and existential. The goals of education in each of the three methods are essential and complementary for each of the humanities and social sciences, including religious studies. In this respect I do not see unique differences between fields. The differences lie in the content discussed, the history of religions, the curious nature of the object studied, transcendence, and the multiple ways human beings have described themselves as interacting with what they perceive as transcendent. The primary approach to the sacred object, which, of course, can be described in a variety of other ways—such as a transcendent subject or an objectless object—is descriptive and phenomenological. A further qualification also notes that one can study

religious behavior fruitfully without reference to beliefs concerning a transcendent object, but such an approach, often occurring in the social sciences, must remain partial and incomplete.

The socratic tradition is the tradition of facilitation. Its underlying assumption is that persons bring to the classroom or learning situation more than they are aware of, whether the topic under study is logic, poetry, or religion. The role of the teacher in this model is to question, elicit, and make explicit what is already perceived tacitly. It also includes guiding the direction of thought so that the student sees both new intellectual possibilities about the themes under discussion and problems inherent in speaking about them. Since most persons have had some encounter, positive or negative, with some religion(s), there is much already to draw upon.

Related to the socratic orientation is the twentieth century tradition of linguistic analysis which emphasizes the elucidation of propositions, values, and assumptions found in common speech. This approach continues the educational work begun among the Greek philosophers who initiated the Western analytical approach to the study of religion, and continues to this day when an educator understands him/herself as facilitator rather than mere informer. Here the dynamic of learning, rather than the "accumulation" of knowledge, is given priority. From this perspective knowledge is "seen" rather than memorized.

The socratic/linguistic approach has a different orientation from educational procedures that understand the nature of learning under the metaphor of a *tabula rasa*, an empty slate of the mind. The socratic or linguistic strategy finds a mind already rich in knowledge

but in need of stimulation, precision, and integration. Its motto is "Persons know more than they know."

The traditional role of education understands that each generation has the requirement of coming to terms with the inherited values of its society, including its religious values and their impact on society. This orientation maintains a pluralistic understanding of society and perceives the importance of adding to curricula material on Latin and Pacific Rim religious experience in order to respond to recent changes in ethnic distribution.

The socratic or linguistic strategy finds a mind already rich in knowledge but in need of stimulation, precision, and integration. Its motto is "Persons know more than they know."

The traditional model also understands that the values of peoples not currently present in significant numbers in the United States, or values which belong to past civilizations, also have intrinsic worth and contribute to our understanding of human excellence. It also recognizes that religions have not only been the main provider of values for most human societies, but that they have also been an important contributor to conflict in individuals, in societies, and between societies.

The traditional model emphasizes the importance of developing a complex appreciation for the variety of methods that can be used appropriately to analyze the history and content of each of the arts and

sciences. For religious studies this includes training in the history of religions, comparative religion (understood as the study of functional or structural equivalents found between religions), phenomenology (the establishment of adequate categories for discussing religion in a generic way), and a general awareness of all methods that illumine some aspect of that enormous process known as the religious history of humankind.

The field of religious studies has long been at the forefront of concern with intercultural matters.

In the present educational climate that correctly champions internationalism and multiculturalism, it is important for departments of religious studies to remind the university that these values have been espoused and explored for decades in the study of world religions. The field of religious studies has long been at the forefront of concern with intercultural matters. Such concern includes the study of the variety of cultural forms that Christianity and Judaism have taken in Western history.

The emphasis in traditional learning is on mastering a body of facts and methods. This is an essential supplement to the socratic approach and ensures that a corpus of secure data and method is passed down to each generation.

Yet a danger exists in the metaphor of "mastering a body of knowledge" or "mastering a field." The implication is one of taking control. This way of speaking is appropriate in regard to the objective content of an area of learning; however, when approaching works that embody human ideals, or when studying cultural products in the

liberal arts, it is more appropriate to speak of ideals mastering those studying them, or to speak of those exposed to them as challenged by them. In appreciating a drama, a work of art, a religion, or a piece of philosophy there is need for openness to the transforming possibility of the work, an acknowledgment that potential life-altering values stand before the student.

In the area of religious studies my focus is on an existential approach to teaching. The fact that the world religions are such long-lived entities says much about their ability to meet significant human needs. These needs are existential in that they are about the basic questions of meaning that arise in almost all civilizations. Since both the world religions and the smaller religious cultures raise questions about the whence, whither, and why of life, about death, suffering, and injustice, all can be approached through a discussion of the way they offer prescriptions for these enduring questions. Rather than teach the bare history of a tradition, it is important to create a sense of why the aspects of religion (the doctrines, myths, rituals, techniques of transformation, forms of polity, etc.) are (or were) viable options for the people who created and preserved them.

Although I applaud the functionalist approach to the study of religion as a useful lens on religious phenomena, I do not want to confuse a functionalist approach (such as Malinowski's in anthropology) with an existentialist approach outlined here. An existentialist pedagogy does not limit ultimate questions and their solutions to the realm of emotional satisfaction, but instead leaves open the option that different religious traditions are related to something real that transcends the emotions. This is sometimes known as a substantive approach to the study of religion. This approach does not argue for the truth or

falsity of a religious position. Such normative approaches are best done in churches, synagogues, temples, or mosques, and have no place in the intellectual life of a secular institution. But an existential approach does have a concern for accurate descriptions of the way in which different religions understand themselves and interpret their religious encounters. It also allows for the appreciation of a variety of normative approaches when presented historically or descriptively.

But an existential approach does have a concern for accurate descriptions of the way in which different religions understand themselves and interpret their religious encounters.

After accurately delineating the types of religious expression, their histories, and meanings for those who live them, it is also important to explore the various critiques of religion that are also significant ways of viewing religious phenomena, and which stand as important contributions from the humanist strand of scholarly inquiry. But, here again, to present critiques of religious life as normative would violate the nature of the impartiality that has become standard as a university ideal. However, as with the study of normative positions in the history of religion, it is important to study the full range of normative critiques as part of the history of thought that interacts with religious phenomena.

The Study of Religions: *One Field, Many Methods*

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During the last four decades, programs of religious studies have proliferated in public universities. Now, as the paranoia stemming from court decisions about religious practices in public school systems is subsiding and the realization of the importance of the study of religions to the completeness of one's education is dawning, the next four decades will witness expansion of the study of religions in public primary and secondary schools. In 1988 the California State Board of Education published a handbook entitled *Moral and Civic Education and the Teaching about Religion* which not only outlines the legal rights and responsibilities of

school personnel, but urges that objective instruction in religion be made a part of the curriculum.

Even though the academic study of religions is established in public universities, the general public knows little about its methods. And faculty and administrators outside the field frequently misunderstand what it is about and how important it is to a liberal arts education. This is not surprising. After all, if people have studied religion at all, it has usually been done at Sunday or Synagogue school or in conjunction with Bible study groups. It has usually been partisan, often indoctrinational, and hardly what most of us would think of as academic. My wish here is to shed some light on what the academic study of religions is by providing an overview of its subdisciplines and discussing the issue of its academic importance.

...one way to map the field is to describe the major approaches to the study of religions.

Religious studies is multidisciplinary. It uses a variety of methods to study its subject matter. Hence, one way to map the field is to describe the major approaches to the study of religions. The first is the history of religions. This includes developmental and comparative studies. Its purpose is to describe, interpret, and explain the historical development of different religious traditions or parts thereof and the similarities and differences among religions.

Many would also include the phenomenology of religion as part of the historical approach because phenomenology relies heavily on comparative data. But phenomenology, strictly speaking, seeks a descriptive understanding exclusively, fearing that the attempt of the

historian and comparativist to explain religious forms and developments reduces religious phenomena to nonreligious categories and processes. The phenomenologist hopes to be nonreductive, treating religion as *sui generis* rather than an epiphenomenon of historical and social forces.

Special mention should be made of textual and literary studies. Since many of the world's religions claim to have originated in revelatory events recorded in sacred texts, and since the intellectual and devotional history of most religions exists in textual form, the application of modern methods of critical and literary analysis is a vital part of the study of religions. It is important to understand that the goal of such textual studies is not devotion, but the analysis of textual data significant for academic understanding.

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The second major division of the field centers on the use of behavioral science to describe, interpret, and explain religion. The anthropology of religion uses standard anthropological methods to understand religion in relationship to culture. The sociology of religion seeks to understand how religions function within societies. The psychology of religion focuses on religion as an expression of, and influence on, the conscious and unconscious life of the individual. All of the methods and standards of scholarship common to each of these three disciplines are applied to religious behavior with

the intention of producing knowledge about human beings and the way they live.

The third major approach to the study of religion is the philosophy of religion. Unlike the other approaches, philosophers consciously intend to go beyond description, interpretation, comparison, and explanation into the realm of critical evaluation. One aspect of this approach involves the critical analysis of existing religious beliefs and practices in an attempt to determine to what extent such beliefs and practices meet recognized standards of rationality. Is it reasonable, for example, to believe that God exists or that there is some sort of life after death? Another aspect of this approach seeks to construct or reconstruct religious beliefs and practices in a more rational mode. It critically searches for the most reasonable beliefs, whether or not such beliefs are presently part of the world's existing religious traditions.

Special areas of concern, such as religion and the arts and religious ethics which draw on the methods of the social sciences and humanities, also deserve mention. And, like any vital academic field, there is constant change as new areas of interest (religion and feminism, ethnic religions) and new methods (deconstructionism, the new historicism) come to the fore. There are even proposals to broaden both the subject matter and the methods into "worldviews analysis" thereby allowing for the study of ideologies such as Marxism and naturalism as "religious" phenomena. A more detailed discussion would have to touch on such difficult topics as where theology fits (is it part of the subject to be studied or another approach?) and refine considerably my general descriptions of the major areas. However, enough has been said to show that religious studies, like other academic fields of study, follows the current standards of scholarship in its search for knowledge about religions.

In an age of antifoundationalism, postmodernism, relativism, and deconstructionism, one cannot be too smug about the degree to which objectivity has been, will be, or can be attained. The methods and assumptions of academic study must themselves be critically examined. We cannot naively assume that our methods necessarily lead to "the truth." Nevertheless, the desire to control for bias, overcome prejudice, and create knowledge about religions using widely accepted academic methods animates the field.

Religious studies utilizes the methodologies of the social sciences and the humanities to study religion objectively in accord with the best scholarly standards. It is not religious indoctrination. It instructs students in the humanistic and religious heritage of Western civilization and in the religions and cultures of Eastern civilizations (and others) as well. It seeks to counter the widespread ignorance about religions and to instill a critical understanding of, respect for, and tolerance of religious and cultural pluralism and diversity. Because cultural worldviews and values are symbolically crystalized in religious traditions, an understanding of religion is a key that can unlock the door to insights into a wide range of human phenomena that go far beyond the narrow confines of institutionalized religion. For most students, a course in religious studies is their only exposure to the scholarly study of a phenomenon that is so

Religious studies utilizes the methodologies of the social sciences and the humanities to study religion objectively in accord with the best scholarly standards.

pervasive in human societies, so widespread among the world's people, and so central to being human that it, along with politics and sex, is a topic that is sure to provoke controversy.

Surveys tell us that the majority of our citizens regard themselves as religious. They also tell us that the majority have very little knowledge about religions. One only needs to read the newspaper to realize the tremendous power religion has, for good and for ill, to motivate people, shape their lives, and influence political destinies. We will never be able to understand politics in Iran or Indonesia if we are not better informed about the role religion plays in those cultures. To neglect the academic study of religion and abandon education dealing with religious matters to sectarian interests amounts to a failure to educate our students about a central and fundamental dimension of human existence.

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One of the central goals of the liberal arts is to liberate people from the confines of indoctrination and prejudice. We in academe often deplore the ignorance, irrationality, and intolerance we believe are fostered by some religious beliefs and practices. One of the best ways to counter the religious ignorance and intolerance that does exist is to engage in the objective study of religion. In addition, we in the university often pride ourselves on a self-critical attitude. Yet, religious studies is one of the few places in the university where the underlying

values and ideological commitments of this "Church of Reason" are made explicit and critically examined. To argue that religious studies is not central to a university education is equivalent to arguing that the study of one of the most basic and widespread human experiences that shapes our actions, our values, our worldviews, and our cultures in fundamental and extremely subtle ways has no place in the university.

There is greater contact today among the people of the world than in the past. Everything points to increasing contact in the future. Students who know something about the religions, values, and cultures of others and who have developed some ability to compare ideas, practices, and values objectively across cultural boundaries will be better prepared for the future than those who remain comfortably ethnocentric and unaware of the religious values of others.

The Methodological Pluralism of the Academic Study of Religion: *A Note for Our Colleagues*

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In the past, university departments have developed around disciplinary methodologies, but this has not been possible for the academic study of religion, which only in the past few decades has begun to consider the matter of its proper methodology. Indeed, religious studies (or some would prefer religion studies) has no methodology of its own. Religion has sometimes been the subject of research and courses in various departments—history, anthropology, sociology, psychology—and many

degrees still are offered by interdisciplinary committees which draw scholars interested in religion from as many departments as possible. More recently, secular universities such as our own California State University system have begun to establish separate departments of religion studies, bringing up the question of the nature of our separate discipline's methodology.

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The modern academic study of religion was born during developments in the last century which allowed scholars to bracket the normative or mythic claims of religions. This enabled them to study religion from a distance, using methods developed in their separate disciplines. Liberal Protestant theologians demythologized religion from the inside; anthropologists and sociologists included religion in their study of human societies; historians, mythologers, comparativists—and even psychologists, physiologists, linguists and ecologists—found religion to be interesting enough to include in their investigations. The result is that today scholars of religion have at their disposal a pluralism of methodologies which may assist their research and teaching. They have thereby established a multiparadigmatic field, which uses the various paradigms of many fields as complementary rather than disjunctive. Unified hypotheses about religion, such as those offered in various disciplines (psychology, anthropology) have ceded to this natural pluralism, making the term *religious* or *religion studies* appropriate to

religion's multidimensionality in human culture, society, and experience.

Because our colleagues in the CSU system may not be aware of these many points of contact between our "studies" and theirs, I propose a four-fold paradigm to group methodologies that we borrow from them or their investigations. Not all will apply to everything we study, but religious phenomena, being complex, will often be illuminated by a combination of them. This paradigm divides these component methodologies into four groups: those which study the context of religion; the content of religion; the experience of religion; and the interpretation of religion.

Religion scholars can often use studies from the disciplines of biology and ecology, geography, archaeology, and history to enhance their understanding of religions. One of the major schools of religion study is the "history of religions" precisely because religious phenomena must be understood in their particular historical context and setting, how these change through time, and thus also their religious content in different times and places. Just as history can provide specific context-setting information for the development and interpretation of a religious phenomenon and how it changes, archaeology can supplement this portrait with evidence of material remains to complement written texts or, as in prehistoric and

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protohistoric remains, to provide the only evidence we have for religious forms. Cultural geography can similarly tell us things about religions that do not appear in written sources, as demonstrated by David Sopher's *Geography of Religion* (Prentice-Hall, 1967). Another field of inquiry, biology, can reveal much about religion, and Reynolds and Tanner have done so in *The Biology of Religion* (Longman, 1983). Furthermore, ecological studies can enhance our understanding of the context of religion in human societies.

Within the second part of the paradigm are the studies which describe and analyze the content of religious traditions and forms, embracing both the social sciences and the humanities. Cultural anthropologists provide valuable descriptions of religions from the great diversity of human societies, primal and modern, extending the database beyond the textual resources available in the humanities. Sociologists provide equally important information of religions in terms of their social content and presence, expanding our understanding in the direction of nomothetic goals. Similarly, political science and economics provide materials on dimensions of religion in society which otherwise would be omitted from the complete understanding of many of its dimensions.

To these we add the humanistic disciplines, applying their methods to the materials which historians and social scientists make available using their separate resources. Philosophy assists in understanding religious assertions and in clarifying the meaning and status of normative religious doctrines. Its co-discipline, theology, can lead to a comprehension of revelation without necessarily assenting to the truth claims of its believers. For the important matters of myth and text, we apply methods and materials from the fields of linguistics, language

study, literary criticism, and mythology, using them in the realms of textual translation, description, analysis, and interpretation crucial to understanding the diverse meanings of all recorded human religious forms. Similarly, we use the separate disciplines of art, architecture, music, drama and cultural studies to complement these textual disciplines, providing a properly multidimensional portrait of the contents of religious meaning.

The paradigm's third part approaches the experiences religions promote among their communities. Myth supports ritual wherein religion becomes experiential. Thus, ritual studies have recently developed in full form (Ronald L. Grimes, *Research in Ritual Studies*, 1985, and *Ritual Criticism*, 1990, along with his editing of the *Journal of Ritual Studies*) and have become crucial to understanding lived religion, which is still a relatively undeveloped part of religion studies. Lived religion gathers reports and participant observations to use in the understanding of religious experience, something brought to the fore by William James. Along with these, databases have developed the psychology and psychophysiology of religious experience (see Eugene d'Aquili's *The Spectrum of Ritual: A Biogenetic Structural Analysis*, 1979, and Felicitas Goodman's *How About Demons?*, 1988, to understand such experiences through these rapidly expanding fields).

Finally, two methodologies born of the last two centuries of cultural criticism, phenomenology and hermeneutics, though much contested as to their meaning and proper application, provide the fourth part of the paradigm: interpretation. They supply special methodologies to guide and interpret the understanding of the meaning of religion in human culture, society and experience. With all these separate

approaches to human reality in mind, we CSU religion scholars approach our proper field of inquiry, defined as the religious dimension of human life, with a sense of gratitude and respect for the labors of our colleagues who in the course of their studies have come upon and help us to understand religion.

Why Secular Universities Need Religious Studies

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personal anecdote—typical of what some of us who teach religious studies have experienced—will help illustrate the problem this article seeks to address.

Recently, I wrote an essay for *Senate Forum*, the faculty magazine at California State University, Fullerton, on the role of religious studies in a state university. The following is from editor and political scientist Julian Foster's introduction to my piece:

> Many people believe in religion of some kind. Many also believe in astrology. Amongst the educated elite, religious belief, while by no means universally held, is generally treated with respect, while astrology (however many people swear by it) is despised as an ignorant superstition.

> By studying religion while not giving any house room at all to astrology, would the university be recognizing and acting on this distinction? Does the presence of a Religious Studies program implicitly recognize the legitimacy of religion? And if it does, is this a violation of the separation which should exist between church and state? (Hubbard:14)

Not surprisingly, I had anticipated the challenge implicit in the invitation to write such an article and had produced a raison d'etre for the academic study of religion. But the editor's comparison between religion and astrology and the bluntness of his question about church-state separation made me realize again the potential for marginalizing the field and the persistence of the First Amendment question.

Religious studies will probably continue to live a somewhat uncomfortable existence in American public universities because of the church-state issue.

Implications

Religious studies will probably continue to live a somewhat uncomfortable existence in American public universities because of the church-state issue. W. Royce Clark has comprehensively surveyed the problem in an essay on the legality of religious studies programs in public universities. He notes that the 1963 *Schempp* decision, viewed by religion scholars as the Magna Carta for teaching their subject in public universities,[1] is not an airtight defense against future constitutional challenges. In that case, the Supreme Court struck down Bible reading and recitation of the Lord's Prayer

in public elementary and secondary schools as violations of the First Amendment. Only in a "dicta" did Justice Clark add that "...one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization." Justice Clark elaborated further that:

> ...the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as a part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment. (Clark: 116-17)

Royce Clark points out that "dicta" are statements of the court which are not necessary to its decision and do not serve as precedents in future cases (i.e., are not binding).

It is not at all clear that Justice Clark envisioned departments of religious studies on state university campuses. And it is conceivable a future litigant might argue that a religious studies program on such a campus has a religious purpose merely by virtue of its distinct identity. (Clark:117) It is certainly true that at some institutions comparative religion is offered within the philosophy department and the history of religion within history (see below).

Royce Clark also notes the problems inherent in the word "objective" used in the *Schempp* "dicta." In his opinion it has forced religious studies departments "...into a rather impossible defensive posture of sustaining pure objectivity in teaching, a requirement not imposed on any other discipline in the university." (Clark: 115)[2] He suggests the operative word should be "critical" rather than "objective." In this

way, the elements of "critique and even self-criticism" enable the religious studies teacher to maintain the tension between caring for[3] a subject matter such as the Bible or a religious tradition such as Islam, and standing outside the subject or tradition so that the teaching of religion (i.e., inculcation) is avoided. (Clark: 138) A comparison might help: a professor of American studies is clearly not neutral or purely objective about the importance of the American experience; yet, were she to teach the subject without critical attention to the tragic and barbaric aspects of that experience, her work would lack the self-critical dimension. Similarly, there have been dysfunctional periods in the histories of various religions and of their surrounding cultures. Fanaticism and consequent persecution of non-believers are part of the legacy of most of the world's religions at some point in their histories. To deny or explain away such eras is to teach and to pursue research uncritically.[4] Stephen Crites has eloquently expressed this point:

... a professor of American studies is clearly not neutral or purely objective about the importance of the American experience; yet, were she to teach the subject without critical attention to the tragic and barbaric aspects of that experience, her work would lack the self-critical dimension.

> Criticism of religion is not hostile, but it is independent and suspicious. It does not accept at face value the apologetic self-presentations of religious devotees, or, for that matter, the popular polemics of their opponents. (Crites:17)

Crites notes that this "posture of suspicion" is the result of academic study in the post-Enlightenment era in which students apply the methods of historical investigation to test the historical claims of religious communities as to their origins and past developments. (Crites: 17)

Nowhere has this been more true—and more controversial for students and the general public as well—than in literary-historical studies of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. But it is precisely in the work of raising questions about what matters most to people, their sacred scriptures and the convictions about life they draw from these, that religious studies performs an indispensable critical function. To cite just two examples with profound social implications, academic biblical studies have been responsible for a more positive understanding of the Jewish people in the first century C.E., and of the dignity and role of women in both Israelite and early Christian societies.

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Sheryl L. Burkhalter pursues the problem of objectivity raised by Royce Clark in a parallel way by calling in question the "of/about" distinction common among religious studies professors. (Burkhalter: 146) As long as we avoided the teaching *of* religion and simply taught *about*

it, so it has been argued, we could steer clear of legal difficulties.[5] We would also gain the respectability we sought within the academy in accord with the Enlightenment approach to knowledge. However, Burkhalter observes that "Reason" as "an abstract and static norm defining the 'givenness' of things" is no longer the sole criterion for getting at the truth. As she further states:

> ...the radical oppositions of "knower/known," "subjective/objective," "intellectual/political" and—might I emphasize—"of/about" do not serve us well. Presented as alternatives, they conceal more than they reveal: the differentiation they afford misrepresents the case. (Burkhalter: 148)

Of course, this does not mean that religious studies can revert to teaching theology or theologies, or that reason and the legacy of the Enlightenment are worthless. The slash lines between knower/known, etc. continue to have value but are not absolute. This is because—despite the slash lines—"subjective" and "objective" and "of" and "about" are closely connected. For example, in biblical studies courses Protestant Fundamentalism sometimes becomes an issue. I have not as yet met a fundamentalist who teaches religious studies at a public university. But I have met former fundamentalists, as well as a cadre of decidedly non-fundamentalists, who have had to deal in class with students strongly espousing the cause of biblical inerrancy. Here, the lines between subjectivity and objectivity, of and about, become partially erased. A religious studies professor may be personally challenged—even annoyed—by the questions of a fundamentalist student. The acknowledgement of one's subjectivity is crucial in such situations and is the best safeguard against lack of respect or fairness toward fundamentalist students or the movement

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itself. Put another way, teaching *about* fundamentalism will be more balanced and accurate if the teacher acknowledges to himself and his students that the teaching *of* fundamentalism is difficult for him to comprehend and impossible to accept.

As if the church-state problem—and the related issues of teaching critically and in light of one's own subjectivity—were not enough, there is also the second tier nature of religious studies and the potential for marginalizing it. Fields such as history, philosophy, and English literature simply do not have to justify their existence in liberal arts programs the way religion does. They are considered basic, first tier, indispensable. If they are not offered, there is no longer a university in the fullest sense.[6] If, by contrast, a university decides for financial reasons to shut down its department of religious studies, it remains an institution of higher learning.

The situation in the California State University illustrates the second tier phenomenon. There are eight religious studies departments amongst the 20 campuses; and, on three other CSU campuses, a religious studies major can be pursued through either the departments of history or philosophy. In the nine-campus University of California, the situation is similar: three actual departments (at Davis, Riverside and Santa Barbara), with M.A. and Ph.D. programs only at Santa Barbara.[7] Another telling statistic is the presence of doctoral programs in religion at only eight U.S. public universities and of master's programs at only 22. (Mills: 422-37)

Responses

What is the best response to this academic marginalization? On the one side, there is the danger of claiming too much. As the previous

discussion indicates, at least a portion of the subject matter of religion does manage to get taught in other departments in the absence of a religious studies department. Moreover, despite its importance to the lives of hundreds of millions of believers worldwide, an understanding of peoples' religions is not by itself the key to solving such problems as ethnic and political strife, religiously motivated terrorism or human rights abuses. Rather, academic religion studies can provide some of the information and insight needed to solve them.

From the beginning, religion scholars have drawn on the contributions of historians, linguists, literary scholars, anthropologists, archaeologists, philosophers, and theologians in examining religious traditions.

On the other side, we in religious studies have not articulated well enough what makes our field of investigation so important. I suggest the following three characteristics of the academic study of religion epitomize that importance and should be noted in discussions with colleagues unfamiliar with our work.

The Interdisciplinary Character of Religious Studies

At a time when the various disciplines of the humanities and social sciences are under fire for excessive ghettoization (Smith: 239-42), religious studies has a history of interdisciplinary approaches to its subject matter. From the beginning, religion scholars have drawn on the contributions of historians, linguists, literary scholars, anthropolo-

gists, archaeologists, philosophers, and theologians in examining religious traditions. We have been unashamed borrowers because we recognized that a religion is too complex to be studied and appreciated from only one or another perspective. As a consequence, religion scholars have been pioneers in the employment of such tools as hermeneutics, including structuralist approaches, and feminist analysis of texts and religious traditions. Crites notes that the rise of feminism in the academy has been almost coterminous with the emergence and maturation of our field and that "...the number of gifted feminist critics attracted to the academic study of religion has achieved an influential critical mass." (Crites: 17)

In Harry Wells' essay in this volume, he calls religious studies a "thorn in the side" of the university which reminds it that something is not functioning right, "that our disciplines are templates based on specific assumptions for specific information." (Wells: 18) When put all together, the various fields still don't provide the whole picture, because the institutions where we teach and do research have tended to become pluraversities rather than universities. Wells believes religious studies reminds the university of this shortcoming by virtue of its scope and its interdisciplinary and phenomenological approaches. On the one hand, he grants, our field is like others in limiting in order to describe. On the other, its subject matter, like life itself "refuses to submit fully to our templates," and is "a constant reminder to ourselves and our colleagues of the limitations of models and paradigms." (Wells: 20)

The Multicultural or Global Character of Religious Studies

In the one-semester world religions survey which my Fullerton colleagues and I offer, it is fairly common to find—in a group of 125

students—representatives of most of the religious traditions covered in the course. They have come to California from Mexico, Vietnam, Iran, India, Korea, and elsewhere. Their multiethnicity and multireligiosity mirror the subject matter. In one week during the spring 1990 semester, I talked with a Jain student from India whose vegetarianism had been ridiculed by his American-born roommate and with a Shiite Muslim who was having trouble dealing with the class discussion of contemporary Iran, the country she had fled. My experience is not unique to religious studies teachers in the CSU system or elsewhere. Our field had this multicultural character before large numbers of immigrants began arriving in the mid-1970s, but the recent wave of immigrants and the growing interdependence of the world have reinforced its importance. In short, it has become difficult—at least in major American cities—to teach children, counsel, treat patients, conduct business, or report the news without some knowledge of the religious traditions and the accompanying cultures of the variegated people who dwell in them. Of course, religious studies is not the only place in academe where students get educated in multiculturalism; but it is an important one because religious loyalties are so closely intertwined with ethnic and cultural ones.

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The Existential Character of Religious Studies

Jacob Neusner has written that religion "beats at the heart and soul of humanity's social life...serves as arbiter of culture and source of the values of politics and economy alike...defines the public life of humanity." (Neusner: 34) Religion is intertwined with the rest of life as perhaps no other activity. It is, therefore, too important not to be studied. But in the studying, our students are made to face questions about the meaning of existence more directly than in any other field save perhaps philosophy. In philosophy, though, students usually come with a clean slate: no prior attendance record in the church of platonism, aristotelianism, hegelianism, linguistic analysis or deconstructionism. Not so with religious studies where almost all students either have or have had a religious affiliation. (The few who were raised as atheists or humanists have probably had to defend their position before getting to college.) Students know what it means to practice religion, but not philosophy or sociology. This is why Robert Michaelsen of UC Santa Barbara's religious studies department requires the students in his Religion in America introductory course to write a paper in which they must learn about and reflect on their own religious roots. "This," he writes, "not only personalizes the subject but also gives some fuller sense of both continuity and change in human experience." Traditions are "real albeit shifting. They may even resurge." (Michaelsen: 353)

...in the studying, our students are made to face questions about the meaning of existence more directly than in any other field save perhaps philosophy.

Is the closeness of studying religion to practicing it dangerous to the intellectual health of our students? I think not. When one is made to look at other religious possibilities—other worldviews—in an academic way, intellectual virtues are nurtured: honesty, fairness, diligence in the pursuit of the all the data being investigated, respect for other viewpoints and—most particularly—empathy. Empathy involves both "aesthetic appreciation" and "aesthetic distance" from a subject that remains "other" at least while it is being studied. (Crites: 13) Texts are read empathetically by paying close attention to what is said and how, to the social and religious situation of the writer and his audience, to the mythic worldview presumed by writer and audience. Empathy must also be brought to the study of artifacts, customs, rituals, and institutional polities—especially among groups such as Native Americans with a limited textual legacy. (Crites: 14)

...religion studies have an existential quality: They not only touch the personal experiences of students but their social and political ones as well.

Finally, there is a second sense in which academic religion studies have an existential quality: They not only touch the personal experiences of students but their social and political ones as well. The Islamic revolution in Iran, the establishment of settlements on the West Bank by Jewish fundamentalists, clinic rescues by antiabortion activists, Sikh terrorism in India, pleas by the Dalai Lama or Pope John Paul II for an end to human rights abuses, and the tears of defrocked televangelists asking for clemency—all have

been part of the TV evening news and of discussions around family dinner tables. How to make sense of it all? Religious studies courses can provide a forum—ideally an intellectual sanctuary—for the free discussion of these issues.

It is no accident that in 1989 the American Academy of Arts and Sciences awarded Martin Marty, the distinguished historian of religion in America, a five-year grant to study the emergence of fundamentalism worldwide. The first volume of essays, *Fundamentalisms Observed*, appeared in 1991. It is also no accident that journalists now contact religious studies scholars for background on stories which intersect religion and public affairs in much the same way they seek out historians, political scientists, or psychologists.

Conclusion

Twenty years ago, in his landmark study of undergraduate religious studies programs, Claude Welch observed that "the balancing of concern and commitment with the criteria and standards of empirical or scientific investigation" was a major issue for all undergraduate education. (Welch: 123) He added that in religious studies the concern with questions of ultimacy and life-commitment and the related issues of advocacy and self-criticism made the field an exemplar of the general problem of involvement versus disengagement. In the years since Welch's work appeared, religious studies scholars have continued to wrestle with these concerns and, as discussed, with the related vexations of marginality and constitutionality. But the wrestling, like the patriarch Jacob's with the angel, has produced blessings: We have had to conduct an ongoing self-examination of the integrity of our work, which has helped keep us honest; and we have emphasized interdisciplinary, multicultural and existential qualities which the

academy has come to value. To return briefly to the comparison between religion and astrology that catalyzed this essay: People may "believe in astrology" but no one, to my knowledge, has died for it; nor have wars been fought over it, nor worlds changed by it.

Endnotes

1 According to Welch (50), of 96 religion programs in existence at public universities in 1970, 44 were founded between 1966 and 1970.

2 Marty (1989:7) calls this the "more positivist than thou" stance towards our non-religious studies peers!

3 On the question of caring or speaking for the religious traditions, see Wilken.

4 Sharma presents a controversial and thought-provoking approach to studying religions critically and without apologies.

5 Minor and Baird argue quite persuasively for the merits of the "of/about" distinction.

6 Compare Neusner's sentiments: 32-4.

7 UC Berkeley does offer an interdisciplinary major in religious studies but has no department.

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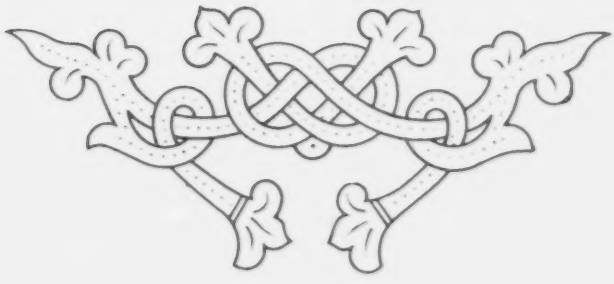
Teaching Approaches



Capturing the Captivated: *The Teacher as Impersonator*

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*o content of an utterance, but the speaking voice; no instructing, but the glance, the movement, the being-there of those teaching when they are inspired by the educational task. Relationship educates [*Beziehung erzieht*], provided that it is a genuine educational relationship.*

—Martin Buber

"So I'm at a tire dealership the other day to have the front end of my Jeep aligned," I begin the Death, Dying & Religions class, without any further notice. "There is only an empty-minded TV staring at

me, and, with nothing to read, I ponder how I am going to pass the next hour. Sitting next to me in the customer waiting area is a biker dude. (*Fitting gestures and facial expressions highlight the telling of the tale.*) He has long, dark hair, a beard, a leather jacket, the name of his club printed on a shirt stretched tightly across his ample girth, jeans with a ring of keys hanging from one belt loop, and a pair of pointed, black leather boots. [Smiles appear on several students' faces.]

"'You wan-ah paper?' he says and tosses the front page of the *Chronicle* onto the table between us. (*A gruff voice and heavy gestures are used to accentuate the biker's articulation.*) Even though I had read it earlier in the morning, I thank him and begin to read aimlessly. It's probably better than talking to this character, I think. But old news is soon dead news, so I put the paper down.

"Within minutes what I did not want to happen happens. He begins to speak to me, first about problems with his bike, then about the quality of the service at the tire dealership. Remember the distinction," I ask the class, "that we made at the beginning of the semester between *having* a dialogue (i.e., where I try to control the conversation by responding with judgments and associations), and *being* a dialogue (i.e., where I allow the dialogue to have its own voice)? With that in mind, I ask him how he feels about Governor Wilson's recent signing of the new helmet law for motorcyclists. I expect a vendetta directed against unjust politicians and the like.

"'I was relieved,' he says, 'a lot of us were.' (*A fuller attention to the story is reinforced by the speaker's moving closer to the students.*) 'I had a pretty bad accident a few years ago and got lucky. But even though I want to, I can't wear a helmet 'cause of peer pressure. (*An open mouth and wide eyes accentuate the listener's surprise.*) Now, I'll be able to 'cause we have to—but not 'till the first of the year!'

"In the midst of my amazement he asks, 'wha-do you do?'

"'I teach comparative religions at the San Jose University.'

"'Like theology?' he asks.

"'No, like the academic study of various religious traditions without putting one over any of the others,' I say.

"'Oh,' he continues: 'well, you're a perfect dude to ask.' His face fills with excitement. 'I always wanna ask someone. . . did God create man, you know, in His own image, or did man create God in his own image?' *(A pause in the telling of the story allows listeners to be grasped by the question.)*

"'That is *the* question,' I say to him. 'Maybe it's like the chicken and the egg,' I say. 'Maybe God created human beings so that they could create God. It's like a partnership. In fact, a great theologian [Meister Eckhart] once said: "The eye with which I see God is the very eye with which God sees me!"' His 'humm' suggests that he has never thought about this kind of answer. That dialogue might never have occurred had I not recalled the distinction between *having* and *being* a dialogue.

"And then, two days later, I tell this same story to a professor of Jewish studies at U.C. Santa Cruz. Listen to his response. (*The speaker adopts the tone of a Jewish sage.*) 'Ken,' Mishael says, 'do you know what he did? He carried you on his shoulders. There's an ancient proverb that goes like this. If two people meet on a road and they are walking in the same direction, the first question asked is: Should we walk together? The second question is: Should I carry you on my shoulder, or should you carry me on your shoulder? The biker carried you on his shoulder by making the time pass by quickly.'"

Without pausing to comment, I continue with a series of questions: (*A glint in the speaker's eye and a challenging tone in his voice invites the listeners to refocus on what is about to be said.*) "Are you aware of what I just did? Did you catch the transition between the two stories? You see how they connect? How do they relate to the readings for tonight's class?" With this attention-capturing introduction, the class begins.

The Grand Impersonator

Like an artist, an exemplary teacher is always adapting, always adapting—out of necessity if for no other reason. If one were to randomly ask the widest possible cross-section of American university students about their dislike of college classes, the response would be nearly unanimous—they are boring! Over and over I hear students complain about a kind of self-perpetuating, deadening monotony that seems to have a tenacious stranglehold on the academic enterprise. Like victims of unconscious brainwashing, students often reflect feelings of impotency and passivity toward their courses. While teachers are, or should be, aware of this, few of us know what to do about it. Here I will speak of a pedagogical ploy which for me, more than any other, has dramatically broken the cycle of classroom boredom.

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It begins with a self-aware self-characterization. It begins with the recognition that teaching is a form of theater. To draw students forth from intellectual inertia and mental numbness, I enter the class not as

the person who left his office, but as a performance artist of the spoken word. That is, I become an *impersonator*. First, I assume the role of a master teacher (like those who transformed my educational experience). Then, from a repertoire of characters, I can assume various roles both to edify and to entertain. I think of it this way: Like an actor, a teacher should know his or her lines, that is, be comfortable with the material to the extent that it can be presented without notes, or with a minimum of references (maintaining eye contact with the audience is the actor-teacher's primary tool). Knowing the material extremely well allows one to slip in and out of character with gestures, intonations, and bodily movements which attract and capture attention. "Expressing ideas with a showing-not-telling style," as one student remarks, "was like watching a movie every week on a different subject."

"Expressing ideas with a showing-not-telling style," as one student remarks, "was like watching a movie every week on a different subject."

Of course, the actor has one advantage over the teacher—external props (e.g., lights, scenery, costumes). To supplement for this lack, the teacher brings to the class the power of a *cultivated personality* by which he or she is able to animate various characters in their appropriate roles. Teaching is raised to an art form when *class data* and *personality power* are honestly and creatively balanced. When teaching overemphasizes the material, students drift into the kingdom of boredom. When teaching overemphasizes the personality of the teacher, the material itself is abused and obscured. But when material

is presented through various impersonations, not only are students willing to listen with full attention but, more significantly, they are willing to actively engage the enacted presentation.

Simply put, performance-teaching has two telling purposes which cannot be separated—*edification* and *entertainment*. While it is impossible to describe the process adequately (since it forever adapts new styles, new gestures, new voices, new stories, new jokes), next to speaking about it "in character," it is best to invite the audience to have a say. What follows will largely be comments selected from some 200 students in my spring 1991 Death, Dying & Religions class who were asked to characterize their perception of "teaching as performance." Their comments fall under two headings: ways in which the "true life, true learning, true involvement" style of the class directly involved them (*edification*); and ways in which the "slightly nuts or far out" role-playing style awakened and captivated their attention (*entertainment*).

Edification

To edify, what is taught must stick. As one student writes: "I'll never forget when you described the process of engaging the class material as biting into a 'juicy pear' and getting the sticky sweetener all over ourselves. If teaching is theatrical, it is also participatory. It is not just watching, but becoming involved in the process of dialogue." Another writes: "By pulling the class onto a stage, the teacher makes me feel like I'm part of the lecture." Still another writes: "It is like being invited into the drama with sometimes just a word or a phrase. This hook that grabs us leads to yet more hooks always challenging, probing, and asking important and ultimate questions of ourselves. These hooks are never-ending and can lead us to play out this drama outside of class by sharing our newfound information." To encourage

awareness of this phenomenon, I often invite students to become self-critically aware of the listening they bring to class. I invite them to come to class as if to a play, in other words to don the role of a theater-goer. It is suggested that students should not be passive receptors, but active and interactive listeners. As one student writes: "The teacher improvises and draws reactions, and then plays on that interest to hold our attention to the material." She continues: "The evocative use of reactionary statements focuses the student's attention and forces them to get in touch with their preconceptions while learning about others at the same time."

By performing stories (not merely retelling them), key elements emerge which would have otherwise remained unnoticed.

One way to gather and hold attention, as one student notes, is to put on a "dog and pony show with substance." What almost always piques interest in the unfolding, ever-adapting show, is in-character storytelling which personalizes the course material. By performing stories (not merely retelling them), key elements emerge which would have otherwise remained unnoticed. One student writes: "Stories or tales that are involved in the course are not just told. You get into the characters as if they were next door! This makes the material more accessible because it happened to you and you are telling us."

For example, when relating the Upanishadic story of the boy Nachiketas' visit to Yama's underworld kingdom, I intertwine fitting personal associations (e.g., watching my father kill a stray cat when I

was an impressionable nine-year-old), or add a contemporary twist (e.g., Yama had gone to the Santa Cruz beach and boardwalk for three days). When I retell the story of Buddha's Four Passing Sights, I give it a Joseph Campbell slant and ask the listeners to recall their first experience with death. The story of Psyche and Eros is presented as it might be pictured in a soap opera with all the emotional ups and downs befitting the encounter of Psyche, Eros, and Thanatos. Biblical stories are at times recast in a contemporary idiom to help students interact with figures they can see rather than descriptions which elicit no images. Performance-teaching, in other words, is a matter of impersonating and thereby recreating the characters being taught.

Entertainment

The other half of this—how it actually gets enacted—is even more difficult to express, for words only de-motion, de-voice, de-face, and de-gesture the impersonation. Teaching-in-role, according to student responses, involves body gestures, facial expressions, voice modulation, mood swings, and channeled energy. A student writes: "The teacher-performer-entertainer is alive and unlike the common instructor. He cares about what he's teaching, but not by having any inhibitions, only by projecting his personal self into all the material." Speaking of the energy it takes to sit through two-and-a-half-hour evening classes, another student characterizes the performance aspect of teaching in the following list: "Emotional speech, body language, word choice, commanding tone, animated gestures, exaggerated facial expressions." The "class-room theater," as one student describes it, "for many was brought alive by tonal inflections, along with a loud, clear voice." Another student writes that the instructor "brings interest to a class with just a tone of voice, a look, a gesture, or a humorous statement."

More than any other characteristic, humor was singled out as a major factor for keeping the class awake. Speaking about the need for teachers "to capture their captive audience," one student writes that the instructor "takes a subject and transforms it into a work of theater, with laughter, surprise, anticipation—all the emotions that any good actor must work to convey." Being willing to be stupid, to mock oneself and to be laughed at, cannot be overemphasized. Together, attributes of "the lunatic actor," the "crazy teacher" and the "wacky one" contribute to the actor-teacher's mission—"to teach in an entertaining fashion." As a student suggests, the performance-lectures keep the class alive. "It makes learning an active experience for the teacher/performer and the students/audience. It also makes the information-gathering process more enjoyable, and indicates the passion behind the career of teaching." Performance-teaching, one could even say, is also a matter of impersonating the audience so that the teacher knows more clearly how and when to impersonate the material.

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If the art of educating involves drawing a student forth from prior understandings into the realm of new possibilities (i.e., into a consideration of, and a wrestling with, new questions in a deeper, more profound dialogue with the course configurations), perhaps we must envision the classroom not merely as a data bank, but as a theatrical performance in which the teacher poses as the one being taught—at

least until the curtain falls and interpretation begins. A student sums it up this way: "The teacher as actor draws the audience/student into the realm of instruction. Your humor, your imagery, your honesty and your humanness spark our curiosity, and we want to look, listen, and learn. Education + Entertainment = Enjoyment."

The University: *Newman's and Ours*

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In connection with the centenary of the death of John Henry Newman in 1990, our department offered a senior seminar on the life and work of this remarkable theologian, philosopher, historian, educator, and man of letters. Newman's experience of the university in Oxford and Dublin bore little resemblance to our 25,000-student commuter campus, but I thought it would be good to explore the points of contact. Since I had written a master's thesis on him twenty-five years earlier, I volunteered to teach the course. It was fun revisiting nineteenth-century Oxford, London, Birmingham, and Rome in preparing the class and working out assignments, even if it was only in the library.

Among many other things, students had to read Newman's *Idea of a University* for the class and to do two other projects. In writing, they had to say what their idea of a university was and what their best educational experiences were. In addition, they had to invite someone

from the university community to discuss these same topics. (More of this later.)

Newman and the University

The origins of his book were something of an afterthought. The trustees of the not-yet-started Catholic University in Dublin invited him to become that institution's first president in 1851 and wondered if he "could spare some time to give us a few lectures on education." (1961:14, 257) These lectures, published week by week, developed into the volume we currently know.

The book reflects the time, place, and occasion of the original lectures. Newman, for example, took it for granted that all students would be men, so there was no provision at all for women. Also, he clearly considered only Western civilization as a part of the curriculum. And he spent no little time justifying the inclusion of religion in the curriculum, pointing out that it would be every bit as foolish to exclude religion as it would be to exclude the observational sciences. This protracted discussion had its origins in the several Queen's Universities, like the University of London, founded in the mid-nineteenth century. Their charters directed them away from religion so that university training would develop an enlightened class of a different breed, unencumbered by the burdens of musty church history, like the old-fashioned schools of Oxford and Cambridge.

Newman, the former Oxford don, had no trouble adjusting to the changing urban environment from which his students would be drawn and in which his campus was located. He advocated evening classes and was one of the first to establish an endowed chair in English literature. For him, the university was not the technical training school, the professional research institute, or the state licens-

ing agency. He advocated a liberal education, an enterprise to produce a gentleman: "one who never inflicts pain." (1960:159) And while his task was to create a Catholic university, he had no illusions about the scope and limits of a liberal education. Holiness and piety were not the hallmarks of a university education.

> [A liberal education] makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life; these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University;... but still, I repeat, they are no guarantee for sanctity or even for conscientiousness, they may attach to the man of the world, to the profligate, to the heartless. (1960:159)

...the university, by bringing people of different disciplines together, helps create the atmosphere of a universal outlook, forcing one to venture beyond the horizons of a single discipline.

He considers, rather, the end of the university education the cultivation of the student's mind so that "the intellect is properly trained and formed to have a connected view or grasp of things." (1960:xlii)

Universities will differ one from the other because they have decidedly different philosophies of education. An institution that rejects ethics or religion as legitimate intellectual pursuits will have a different character from institutions that accept them. By the same token, an

institution that considers dueling and military sciences as integral to its curriculum embraces an educational philosophy abundantly different from those which do not. What the university teaches—or does not teach—contributes to its "philosophical habit of mind," its understanding "of one science or another, and the use of each to each, and the location and limitation and adjustment and due appreciation of them all, one with another." (1960:76)

The sheer mass of knowledge available in the modern world precludes anything like the medieval attempts at mastering everything there is to know. But the university, by bringing people of different disciplines together, helps create the atmosphere of a universal outlook, forcing one to venture beyond the horizons of a single discipline.

> Though they cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. This I conceive to be the advantage of a seat of universal learning, considered as a place of education. An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his own case he only pursues a few sciences out of the multitude....He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little. Hence it is that his education is called liberal (1960:76-77).

While he recognizes the specific task of the different disciplines, he advocates a different approach for a university course in a given topic

from the treatment it will receive in a professional or technical school. At the university, the professor has to place his discipline in the context of other studies. Classes at the university have to be more than just the lectures of a lawyer, physician, or geologist. The professor of law, medicine, or geology has to raise issues that go beyond disciplinary turf. For example, there has to be room for a discussion of the ethical, sociological, and psychological dimensions of medicine that the practitioner will not deal with in any systematic way. Or if the study of religion were carried on for the purpose of preparing preachers or catechism teachers, it would fail to meet the criteria of a university course. Such courses belong in a seminary and constitute training, not university education. (1960:126)

One last notion of Newman's worth mentioning is residence hall. He favored them, although he planned to avoid the semi-autonomy of the Oxford plan of colleges. A commuter campus would be completely beyond his ken.

> If I had to choose between a so-called University, which dispensed with residence and tutorial superintendence, and gave its degrees to any person who passed an examination in a wide range of subjects, and a University which had no professors or examinations at all, but merely brought a number of young men together for three or four years, and then sent them away...if I were asked which of these two methods was the better discipline of the intellect, [if] I must determine which of the two courses was the more successful in training, molding, enlarging the mind,...I have no hesitation in giving the preference to that University which did nothing, over that which expected of its members an acquaintance with every science under the sun. (1960:109-110)

He develops the idea with considerably more nuance, but his point is clear: the community of scholarship means more than meeting only in the lecture hall.

Some Fullerton Professors and the Idea of a University

Don Schweitzer, psychology, and dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Carol Copp, sociology, Rhonda Packer, religion studies and Helen Jaskoski, English, joined us on separate occasions to tell us what they thought the university is or ought to be. They were at once more eloquent and nuanced than I report, but I think this is close to what they had to say.

Dean Schweitzer traced today's curriculum back to medieval universities, showing a lot more continuity than change. He felt the medieval schools were largely training schools for professionals, but—since there are so many more professions today—there are a lot more majors. Universities, conservative places that they are, responded to the development of new professions by creating new majors rather than setting the pace by establishing these new disciplines first.

He advised students not to marry their major to what they plan to do for a living. The major can prepare the student for a career in many different fields, not just what it sounds like. Besides, jobs change so much in the course of the years that anything learned now has to be relearned later. Better to major in something enjoyable.[1]

Dr. Copp pointed out that we have often made universities into trade schools, turning out accountants, physicians, and lawyers. What we ought to do is pay attention to who is paying for university research to see who has the greatest stake in universities. As Deep Throat suggests in *All the President's Men*, we ought to follow the money to find out where the values are. It seems that one of the principal functions of

the university today is to provide an abundant pool of technically competent people so that major corporations do not have to pay to educate anyone. Their hefty government subsidy—in the form of cheap state tuition—permits companies to show greater profits without ever worrying about funding this essential component of their organization.

But universities do not have to be hiring halls for Fortune 500 companies. They have a traditional role of preserving the world's cultural heritage and, often, have even been good at it. Further, they can and should question things as they are. By asking fundamental questions of society's institutions that go a long way toward building a new society.

But universities do not have to be hiring halls for Fortune 500 companies. They have a traditional role of preserving the world's cultural heritage....

Professor Jaskoski pointed out that medieval guilds of teachers put their prints on the universities to preserve their own skins. It was a good job and they wanted to make sure that the job market did not dry up.

What is it that a university can do that no other institution in society can do? The unique, institutionalized product that only it provides is alienation. Everything that before has been simply accepted now goes up for grabs. Sometimes it is gentle. Sometimes it is jarring. But the whole point of the university is to see to it that everything can be done differently. It would be a fraud—a fraud on the taxpayers in the case of a state-subsidized school—if all that came from the university would be slot fillers with a parchment.

Dr. Packer looked at the university as a place to collect different kinds of people and put them on an equal footing. There is room for specialists of all kinds. People concerned with the arcane and those concerned with the common can all find a home at the university. But there is also room for the person who does not fit properly into a category. Call her intuitive, heuristic, interdisciplinary, but do not exclude her.[2]

Some Students and the University

In addition to the seminar participants, some other students came to join us on occasion, too, including a man who had taught high school algebra for twenty years. Students tended to be timid when it came to their ideas of what the university might be. They were more forthcoming, though, in describing it as it is. For the most part, they were pleased with Fullerton, almost embarrassingly so when it came to the religious studies department.

They found Fullerton a friendly place—students and teachers alike—in contrast to several other institutions they were acquainted with. Here they have met people who were under no obligation to do so, but genuinely cared about them, even as they were demanding a great deal of them. The students found especially gratifying those teachers who integrated knowledge and experience. They prized those teachers who valued a student's experience and encouraged her to reflect upon it in a critical way.

As to the best educational experiences they had, almost universally they referred to small-group settings. They did not badmouth large classes but found the smaller ones more helpful. They had experienced these groups both on and off campus. One mentioned a theater group that spent three months rehearsing and staging a play. Another

mentioned a church group that planned and put on a retreat for high school kids. Maybe the high school kids did not get too much out of it, but the college students putting it together sure did. Every one of them who had ever been involved in teaching a class considered this their single greatest learning experience.

From Oxford, Dublin, and Many Other Places to Fullerton

Sometime I amaze myself by creating great assignments. This was one of them. Students and colleagues did all the work,were interested, felt strongly about what they had to say, had some experience to draw upon, and raised questions of great moment. I listened, learned a lot, and did not have to correct many papers. I have a few conclusions based on what I learned in the seminar.

- Cooperative projects are more important than individual assignments. The give and take internalizes the information.
- Raising fundamental questions about life and education often puts study into a new perspective.
- Small groups are often where learning happens.
- If students have to teach something, they may even learn it. Including a teaching assignment helps students learn.
- Whenever you get students together outside of the classroom, there is a good chance that learning will happen.[3]
- Invite colleagues into your class. They are often marvelous people who have a lot to say.

Endnotes

[1] Two would-be lawyers informed him in class that that was why they were majoring in religious studies.

[2] I told the class about Fred Katz, a legendary figure at this university, who never did get a college degree and made his living as a jazz musician before making his way to the academy. Anthropology used to offer a class called simply "The Fred Katz Seminar." Could that still happen? Could someone like Fred even be hired today? What would the Faculty Personnel Committee have to say when it came to discussing his tenure or promotion?

[3] I recently applied for a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to fund a week-long residential, interdisciplinary, small-group seminar just to overcome some of the problems of a commuter campus. The idea is to have students read the works of a single stimulating author beforehand. Then they would spend a week with the author and each other in formal and informal sessions. Unfortunately, it was turned down.

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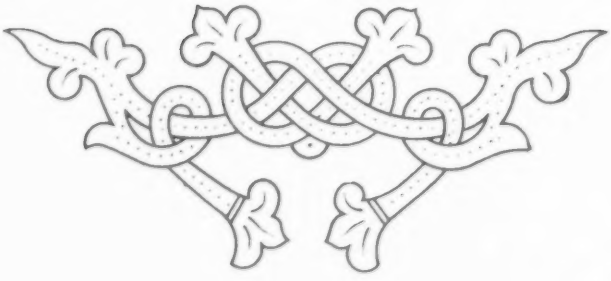
Sub-Fields



Are We Ready for Integration Yet?

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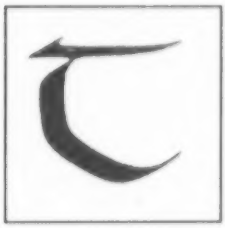

he discipline of religious studies is a distinctively forward-looking field. We pride ourselves on our willingness and readiness to incorporate new methodologies, and to explore new perspectives. We are always standing up and claiming our (admittedly rightful) place in the vanguard of curricular reform. We say—accurately, of course—that we've known for a long time what it means to be interdisciplinary, how to think globally, what including the "other" is all about. We see ourselves as enlightened scholars whose assumptions are all up for scrutiny, whose biases have been hermeneutically analyzed, whose inclusive and catholic view now encompasses all of humanity. We've successfully escaped the bind of the early dominance of religious studies by theological models of education; we've earned and finally achieved a place among the other disciplines of the humanities and social sciences.

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So what's the problem? We do still *have* a problem, and it's the same basic problem faced by the other humanities and social sciences disciplines. Part of the genesis of the problem has to do with the fact that when most of us went to graduate school (and I graduated in 1986!), all of those enlightened global perspectives were current, evolving, and the topic of much discussion and hot debate. But graduate studies had not yet begun, for the most part, seriously to consider the impact of looking at *women* as a valid and vital part of the data addressed in religious studies. The fact that religion is a universal *human* phenomenon, the fact that it appears in every known culture blinded even our discipline, as it had most of the others, to the fact that there are no "universal humans."

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We had not yet noticed, in a way that made much difference to our field as a whole, that "The Religions of Man" were just that: the religions of men. For just as ubiquitous in human society as religion are distinctions made on the basis of gender. The consequences of this fact is that women's religion has been fundamentally different from men's religion. The religious experiences, roles, and images relevant to women in a particular cultural environment may be as different from men's experiences, roles, and images in that same setting as religion in one

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culture and one century may be from religion on the other side of the globe.

This blindness to the data provided by one-half of religious humanity, and the fact that its effects continue to operate in our field, is not anyone's fault. It is, in itself, a consequence of our own dominant culture's continued assumption that the male half of the species is the normal, usual, standard type of human being, and that the female half is the "other." This unconscious rubric persists even in curricula and in course designs that *intend* to be inclusive. It is very common in departments of religious studies to see one course devoted to the topic "Women and Religion." (And this is one of my own favorite courses.) "Women" thus become a special category within religious studies, to be "covered" in one elective course, rather than constituting half of the material available for study in every course offered.

Likewise in "normal," "non-other" courses within the curriculum, most professors make sure to include units on women in the tradition under study, or to assign works by women as well as by men. (Yes, I do this too.) Once again, these arrangements have the unintended effect of *validating* the definition of women as "other," of categorizing women's experience as a special topic among others, most appropriately dealt with in a compartmentalized fashion. For example, among the ten or eleven units in a semester on Judaism, I teach just one on "women." We do look fairly frequently at women's concerns and teachings about women in the other units of the course, enough so that some students complain that they didn't sign up for a women's studies course. (I ask them if they signed up for a men's studies course, because that is what they are getting at least 80 percent of the time!)

But I am still not teaching about the full range of what Jews have

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thought, done, and said in their religious life; my excuse, for now, is that much of women's contributions remain buried, never having been written about or otherwise validated. But that excuse won't wash for much longer. As diligent scholars (mostly women) unearth more and more of the material we need to teach this side of religion, we become less and less justified in remaining silent about it, and in keeping our "normal," male-centered curriculum uncontaminated by the one "other" women-centered course, or by the one or two units on women within a course.

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Trying to rectify this gross methodological error in our teaching will take some doing. Not only do we have to become convinced that it is important to do it. . .that it is right to do it. . . that it is necessary to do it. . .but, in order to do it, we have to engage in some serious *work*. We, men as well as women, have to actually sit down and read those important groundbreaking articles in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* and other journals, as women scholars have always read the journals devoted exclusively to men's religion. Teachers of ethics will study feminist ethicists and incorporate their work into the structure of their courses. Teachers of Judaism and Buddhism are recognizing that the new research available on women in these traditions isn't just for feminists and women scholars to study and build on. It constitutes one of the cutting edges of knowledge in their own field and needs to be taken into account in their course designs.

The shape of the discipline has changed since we were in graduate school. This research on women is certainly not the only way in which it has changed; new research also focuses on folk traditions and nonliterary resources, for example. But the dramatic explosion over the last few years in the number of sections of papers offered under various "Women and Religion" topics at the American Academy of Religion annual and regional meetings is nothing less than astounding. If this vast amount of new research and theory is to remain ghettoized in women's studies courses and small units on women in the "normal" religious studies offerings, it will meet the fate of other "separate but equal" enterprises. Separation by its nature perpetuates inequality. The segregation and compartmentalization of the study of women in religion can only contribute to the maintenance of the *status quo* which continues to define women as "other," special, and therefore not fully human.

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Is it too much to expect that teacher/scholars demand of themselves and of their colleagues that they remain current in the field in which they teach? Ordinarily, it is not. Even with very heavy teaching loads, most professors make an effort at least to browse in the journals relevant to their areas of instruction. We see staying conversant with new developments as part of our own

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continuing education, and a necessary component of the kind of teaching we want to provide our students. The radically shifting shape of the discipline as it responds to the new research on women may require us to do more than casual browsing to stay current, however. I would like to see an opportunity for faculty in religious studies to spend a week or two working together with experts in the field of women and religion, becoming familiar with the parameters of the new research now available, and discussing ways to include it in an integral way in the courses they teach. Such a workshop could certainly be held in conjunction with the sessions for other disciplines as well. Many faculty members in the other humanities and social sciences are doubtless facing the same dilemma. Rather than castigate ourselves, or hide guiltily in the stacks trying to catch up, or simply quietly give up and admit that we were trained before this new development, perhaps we could work together to devise effective means for creating a model for education that is truly inclusive and current.

Jewish Studies and Multiculturalism

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Jewish studies as a discipline is the examination of the civilization of the Jewish people. It is, essentially, ethnic studies. Its breadth is vast: It begins around 1800 B.C.E. and continues to the present; and it is found around the globe. Jews are not a separate race, and they are more than a religious group; they are a multiracial entity that defines itself as a distinct people.

A central element in Jewish civilization is religion, but there is much more than that. Language, literature, the arts, philosophy, politics, law—these exist in a multitude of forms and permutations over the ages. When the Jews were together in one land, and later when they were dispersed, Jewish culture was a product of a dynamic involving adaptation and negation of surrounding cultures. As each Diaspora community recreated itself, though, there were elements at its core common to other Jewish communities that bonded them together.

New to the modern era is secular Jewish culture (art, literature, music), new forms of political expression, and new forms of Judaism. The establishment of the State of Israel has added many new elements to the field of Jewish studies: There is now another sub-ethnic group (Israelis, in all their blended complexities), an enlarged arena for political science studies, and any examination of the Diaspora communities must now take into account the dynamic created by the existence of the state.

Oppression can cement a group of people together, but oppression alone does not create a culture.

Principle. A group of people becomes distinctive when it makes that claim about itself. We have to allow each group to determine which elements are crucial to its identity. Those elements may, or may not, include race, culture, religion, sexual preference, physical characteristics, or lifestyle. Above all, it is a matter of group self-definition. Oppression can cement a group of people together, but oppression alone does not create a culture. We must assume, for those unfortunate groups that have never existed without oppression, that they can also survive amidst friendliness.

Jewish studies as a discipline began as part of a liberation movement, but one that began 170 years ago. At the beginning of the 1800s, the rulers of Western European countries began to emancipate the Jews from centuries of second-class status and political exclusion. This emancipation process, which the Jews did not initiate, had a searing effect on all involved—European society ultimately could not cope with it. But its immediate effect was to awaken the Jews, who had

generally believed that their underclass status was the price they had to pay for permission to retain their distinct culture. Now they were being told that they were entitled to both their culture *and* their rights, and that their Jewish communal leaders no longer had any real authority over them.

As part of their awakening, Jews began to use the tools of academic analysis (that were just emerging) and apply them to their own history, literature, and society. At this point, secular Jewish scholarship commenced. Since that time, Jews in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have contributed to it. It is not surprising that this route was followed: Scholarship has always been central to the Jewish tradition—Judaism's central religious symbol is a book, the Torah. One way that Jews throughout the Diaspora maintained their common identity was that Jewish leaders shared several key books between them, books that served as codes of behavior for their flocks; and they periodically cooperated in revising these code books for new situations. The scientific scholarship that emerged in the nineteenth century has continued to exist (often unpeacefully) side by side with traditional scholarships. Both types of scholarship have been almost entirely the work of males; one of the challenges facing Jews today is to train and empower women to participate in this cultural enterprise as well.

...Scholarship has always been central to the Jewish tradition—Judaism's central religious symbol is a book, the Torah.

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Principle: Writing history is one way that people gain control over their destiny: It is a process of self-definition. The way we write our past says something about our agenda for the future. That is why the question of multiculturalism in the curriculum is such a sensitive one: Our story writing doesn't just recount what happened, it is a statement of what we have been and what we want to become.

> ***In the entire United States, outside of rabbinic colleges, there are only four autonomous Jewish studies departments.***

Jewish scholars rewriting their history were rejecting Europeans' conceptions of Jews, including religious conceptions, but also were breaking loose from Jewish religious traditions and institutions that had constrained their lives. Their attitude toward religion was deeply ambivalent. In the face of rabbinic opposition, Jewish academics asserted that Jews and Judaism had always adapted and absorbed elements of external culture and so should continue to do so. These same academics also recognized, though, that religious traditions and institutions were instrumental to Jewish survival.

Principle: Religion must be a factor in our discussions of cultural diversity, since humans use it to draw boundaries—to define "in" and "out" groups. Sometimes religion can be a progressive and revolutionary force; sometimes it is just the opposite. Rarely is it neutral or powerless.

Jewish scholarship barely penetrated institutions of higher education in America. Until the late 1950s it was the work of a handful of university professors or it was housed in rabbinic seminaries. By the

early 1960s observers noted a sizable growth in the number of Jewish studies courses and faculty positions in traditional departments. Since then the field has grown—though I would like to point out that, overwhelmingly, these courses and positions are housed in other departments or in a loosely structured interdepartmental framework. In the entire United States, outside of rabbinic colleges, there are only four autonomous Jewish studies departments. And Jewish studies, like other gender and ethnic studies, have hardly made a mark on the rest of the university curriculum.

Jews fought for centuries for their equality in America, and (except for short stints of acceptance) for centuries failed. Many American Christians expressed great admiration for Biblical Jews, but found "real" Jews rather distasteful. Very early in American history, those who wanted to exclude Jews kept warning that admitting Jews meant opening the doors to such outlandish people as Turks and Muslims. These objectors were correct. The entry of Jews *qua* Jews into American life only began to occur in the 1960s, only when America became an untidy jumble of ethnic identities, ideological groups, and economic interest—when power was widely dispersed among many opposing factions who could no longer unite to keep others out.

Because of their experience in and out of America, the ethnicity of American Jews is not an easily identifiable one.

Because of their experience in and out of America, the ethnicity of American Jews is not an easily identifiable one. There are some Jews who openly acknowledge their separate cultural identity and who,

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especially when feeling attacked and being attacked, trumpet their right to be different. There are some Jews in America who have assimilated to such an extent that they have lost their separate identity—if they look and sound un-Jewish enough, forget their culture, and choose their friends selectively, it can be done, maybe. There are some who no longer find the designation "Jewish" meaningful to them, and so they drop it. We can't really count these latter two types as Jews, though, since they don't define themselves as such. And we have to try to act humanely and not hold it against them. But the most common approach of Jews toward their ethnicity is a veiled one: The vast number prefer to remain publicly "invisible"—it is safer that way. It is a good survival tactic to remain quiet about who you really are. This is actually the express policy of the American Jewish communal bodies, who have lobbied Congress that if people on their census forms check off "Jewish" as their ethnicity, it be entered into the computers as "missing data."

There are many dangers facing those of us in Jewish studies, ethnic and women's studies, and deaf studies who managed to find the window of opportunity into the academy. One danger is that we compete against each other for greater attention or for the dubious privilege of "most oppressed." It would also be terrible if we, because we "got here first," prevent the emergence of other groups who are, at the present time, too few or too unorganized or too hesitant to come forward. Another danger would be if the university places us in a zero-sum game that encourages this type of competition and dissipates all of our energy.

But I am also worried that at Cal State Northridge we might be content with a half-done job of multiculturalism. It is not enough for us to create an environment in which differences are acknowledged, where we teach "honest history" that includes the diverse peoples that are present. We need to do that, but we need to do better than that. We need to create a community in which different cultural perspectives are not just acknowledged, but *valued*, laid open to analysis, and encouraged to flourish.

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Two Ambiguities in Teaching (About) Religion in California's Public Schools

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A revised version of the handbook *Moral and Civic Education and Teaching About Religion,* published by the California State Board of Education, has been distributed recently to every public school teacher in the state. Because the legislative mandate requires all teachers to attend to it, there is good reason for paying attention to the revisions that have been made. These revisions highlight two significant issues. The first is that, whereas the handbook and the recent History-Social Science Framework presume to present a value-free history of America as a nation *influenced* by religions (especially Christianity) but staunchly

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neutral with regard to any establishment of religion, they actually teach a recognizably Christian value system. The second is that there is a pervasive contentiousness and ambiguity surrounding *e pluribus unum*. On the one side are those who identify with the unity of American culture. On the other side are those who have been denied access to that culture, or who do not accept it. Teachers conscientious about the handbook and the frameworks will find themselves in the ambiguous position of having to teach a Christian view of history while simultaneously denying that it is Christian. And they will teach a student population that views itself equally ambiguously as both American—with commonly shared values—and multicultural—with unique, sometimes conflicting, values (or perhaps as neither one nor the other, neither American entirely nor multicultural entirely). The solution is for teachers to learn to recognize and appreciate the deeply *religious* character of all human life, without at the same time privileging any particular historical religious tradition.

The solution is for teachers to learn to recognize and appreciate the deeply religious *character of all human life, without at the same time privileging any particular historical religious tradition.*

Since it is the responsibility of the university to train teachers (and the California State University system trains more teachers than any other institution of higher education in the United States), a clear understanding of the dilemmas facing public school teachers will enable faculty to structure training programs that will take better account of

religion. In addition, what is happening in the public schools also happens in the public university classrooms, where courses on religion are taught to undergraduates. Therefore, an understanding of these two ambiguities facing public school teachers will benefit university religious studies professors as well.

The first issue is embedded in the language of the legislative mandate. The first issue of the handbook was published in 1973. It was updated in 1988 and revised in 1991. The present edition has been distributed to all elementary and secondary teachers in the state in accordance with Senate Concurrent Resolution 32 (1989), which also requests that it "be read by every teacher and incorporated into all course material where appropriate," as well as "into the state's regional workshops on the History-Social Science Framework" (1991: vi).

The language of the concurrent resolution reveals an important set of propositions about the place of religion and moral instruction in education, including the role of the teacher:

> WHEREAS, The American heritage and laws reflect a common core of personal and social morality, including telling the truth, being trustworthy, and respecting the rights and property of others; and
>
> WHEREAS, The Judeo-Christian heritage is a rich and diverse heritage that has influenced the shaping of fundamental moral values in society and has affirmed in many ways that human beings are moral persons responsible for their own behavior and the well-being of other persons; and
>
> WHEREAS, Public school children should have knowledge of those principles of morality established by tradition and

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heritage as well as enforced by the laws of this state and of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Public school children should have knowledge of, and appreciate the significant contributions of, religion in history and law, and should understand that criminal law reflects moral judgments about standards of conduct held to be enforceable by society; and

WHEREAS, Public school teachers have the responsibility of helping pupils to identify values and moral issues underlying American society; and

WHEREAS, Section 44806 of the Education Code requires each teacher to endeavor ". . .to impress upon the minds of pupils the principles of morality, truth, justice, patriotism, and a true comprehension of the rights, duties, and dignity of American citizenship. . . " (1991: vi).

The second issue is revealed mainly in the revision of chapter four of the handbook. This section is much more detailed than the previous edition, reflecting the recent publication of other new frameworks. The revisions are significant. Where the 1988 edition says that English-language arts instruction should provide "a solid body of knowledge derived from a *common cultural heritage*" (1988: 50, emphasis added), the new edition has "a solid body of knowledge derived from a *multicultural perspective*" (1991: 26, emphasis added). Another example: The 1988 edition says, "The core literary works identified by a school or district offer all students a *common cultural background* from which they can learn about their humanity, their values, and their society" (1988: 51, emphasis added), but the 1991 edition changes this to read, "The core literary works identified by a

school or district offer students a *multicultural perspective* from which they can learn about their humanity, their values, and their society" (1991: 26, emphasis added).

The History-Social Science Framework section has been rewritten and expanded extensively. The 1988 edition merely summarizes the major moral and religious characteristics of each grade. But in the 1991 edition, these descriptions have been expanded, and there is an additional section summarizing seven of the seventeen "distinguishing characteristics" of the framework. These seven characteristics highlight multiculturalism, morality and ethics, citizenship, the Constitution and Bill of Rights, critical thinking, religion, and community service programs. In addition, the revised descriptions of individual grades reveal an emphasis on multiculturalism and cultural and religious diversity, as in the English-language arts section which moves away from the language of a "common cultural background." One example will suffice to catch the flavor of these changes. The 1988 edition has this statement about grade four: "*Grade Four [California Statehood].* Students learn of the events leading to California's entry into the union. Students learn to appreciate the courage and hardships of those who have come to California" (1988: 47). The 1991 edition has this:

> *Grade Four (California: A Changing State)* [which is the correct title of this section in the History-Social Science Framework]. To bring California history and geography to life for students, teachers should emphasize California's people in all their ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity. Students should learn about the daily lives, adventures, and accomplishments of these people and the cultural traditions and dynamic energy that have formed the state and shaped its varied landscape (1991: 29).

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What are the implications of these additions and changes? First, the language of Senate Concurrent Resolution 32 highlights some of the assumptions underlying the frameworks: (1.) there is a "common core" of morality influenced by, if not in fact based upon, the "Judeo-Christian heritage"; (2.) there is a specific connection between morality, law, and religion, (evidently meaning the "Judeo-Christian heritage"); and (3.) teachers are responsible for *inculcating* "principles of morality" and the moral values "underlying American society" (i.e., the "Judeo-Christian heritage," in part or whole). This resolution states, even advocates, a Christian worldview, when it says "Judeo-Christian," a phrase which is blatantly Christian. Neither Muslims nor Jews, not to mention other religious traditions represented in the United States, would be included in this designation. Furthermore, the Education Code's language is not the neutral language required of religion—teaching *about* rather than instruction *in* religion—rather, it is religious language of a specifically Christian moral tone ("endeavor to impress," "true comprehension"). These factors make the inclusion of other religions, as required in the History-Social Science Framework, ambiguous and problematic. They suggest that religious traditions can and should be studied, but only as examples of, or variations upon, or contrasts to, the central Christian affirmations embedded in the morality, law, history, and heritage of the United States; and further, that these Christian affirmations are best taught when their specific religious character is *not* highlighted, but is kept within the framework of American history, morality, law, and heritage. So there is a certain duplicity built into the Frameworks. They advocate careful teaching about the world's religions, but they also do more than teach merely *about* the "Judeo-Christian heritage" of the United States. In addition, they are less than forthright in their treatment of that heritage as it is implicated within the categories of

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history, law, morality, and so forth. If teachers are not aware of these factors, they are liable to be caught in the contradictory position of both advocating and denying religious values and principles. The reason for this duplicity will become clear when we turn to the significance of the revisions in the handbook.

In chapter four, the emphasis has shifted perceptibly from one of "common cultural background" to one of "multicultural perspective," and there is an increased stress on the diversity of media through which religion and morality may be expressed and studied. These changes from the 1988 edition clearly mark a rethinking of the handbook in light of the true objectives, principles, and even language of the Frameworks.

Why did the 1988 edition chose to emphasize the theme of common cultural background, in light of the obvious new direction toward multiculturalism and pluralism advocated by the Frameworks? Without detailed investigation of the composition of the 1988 edition, it is impossible to arrive at a clear answer. One can speculate, however, that running through the thinking about education in California is a certain tension between a "core curriculum" on the one hand, focused on cultural literacy, with a major component of that literacy being the "Judeo-Christian heritage," and, on the other, a diversity curriculum which would look at varieties of cultural/moral/religious experience carefully, unbiasedly, and sympathetically. This tension reveals a systematic and unresolved dilemma in the American mind and heart. We seem to want those habits of the heart that are common to all Americans—if indeed there are such. Yet at the same time we seem to affirm a reasoned and, in the positive sense, politically correct stance that embraces diversity. When it appears that we cannot have it both ways, we hide the commonalities under the guise

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of secular, objective, and neutral education while trying to accept the diversity of moral and religious orientations as parts of a common history and heritage. But the dilemma won't go away. Are we one people, or many? Is it really possible to have unity and multiplicity at the same time? Is there something commonly shared by all Americans, or are we a diverse assortment of orientations and worldviews, living in uneasy truce on this land?

The fact is that the careful study of religions teaches that we are human by virtue of living in a world that cannot be reduced to the categories of our own consciousness.

As long as we doggedly avoid facing the real and central issue presented by the role of religion in American life, as long as we continue to hide behind the wall of separation of church and state, we will be caught on the horns of this dilemma. Teachers will be torn apart by those parents and others who, on the one hand, demand that basic (meaning Christian) morality (including school prayer) be thrust back into an increasingly secular and sinfully humanistic school system, and those who, on the other hand, advocate either no religion at all or a neutral (and, frankly, vapid) review of all religious and moral belief patterns. *The fact is that the careful study of religions teaches that we are human by virtue of living in a world that cannot be reduced to the categories of our own consciousness.* Religion is a factor in all human life, and it is going to be found in the classroom as well, whether one wants it there or not. Without admitting it, the approach to the study of religion taken by the handbook and the Frameworks is itself a new religious moment. It advances an unfolding religious history of the world. It is a movement

from parochial to global consciousness, where everyone will belong to a world community in which *all* the expressions of religious life afford access to faith and to the ultimate for *all* people. In this respect, children studying religious traditions in public classrooms in California are involved in a religious activity; and teaching the world's religious traditions, including the crypto-religious "Judeo-Christian heritage," to all the children in public schools is a part of this new historical moment.

It may be objected that this discovery and exploration of a new way of being is in violation of the constitutional separation of church and state, and that teachers have no business "indoctrinating" sixth graders in a neo-secular humanism. It might be objected further that schools have no right to disturb the quiet comfort of private religious convictions by demanding public study and discussion. Granted there is a legitimate wall of separation between *institutions* of religion and the state, still there can be no separation of education from religion—where religion is considered a dimension of being human—without doing violence to the integrity of that humanity. Robert Bellah has said that there is an

> . . .indelibly religious basis of all social and personal existence. Thus religion, far from being an outmoded symbolic form, proves to be generic to the human species and as such an essential key to the understanding of man. But this position, while ending up reasserting the centrality of religion that traditional cultures had proclaimed, denies the absolutism of orthodoxy by insisting on taking with equal seriousness the entire range of man's religiousness (14).

The classroom is not a place of preparation, outside of or prior to living, but a part of life itself. In that classroom are human beings in

the fullness of their existential, ultimate, and even religious concerns. If children are to come to a full understanding of their own humanity, then schools need to teach not only the religious traditions but the religious dimension of life.

This new religious situation in the classroom fosters a critique of education itself, at all levels. If religion pervades all of life, collective and individual, at all times and places, then there is something beyond the given in all education. Religion does not refer to subject matter only, but to the context and approach of any academic study. Economics, politics, and art should not be studied for their own sakes, but because they embody and reveal something about the human condition, something more than what is contained within their own methodological boundaries.

If children are to come to a full understanding of their own humanity, then schools need to teach not only the religious traditions but the religious dimension of life.

So the question is, can teachers take seriously the human experience of all cultural and religious worlds, including Christianity, as resources for the teaching *of* (not merely *about*) the religious experience of human beings, without advocating one or another, but without denying the significance of each? Can teachers accept the possibility that they are party to the creation of a new religious configuration not seen before on this earth, that has at its center the affirmation of a multicultural religious life (whatever that might entail), the recognition of the contextuality of all knowledge,

and the requirement that children become citizens of the world before they are citizens of any particular nation? Can teachers move beyond the dilemma of the one and the many to a view of human existence that incorporates the inexhaustibleness, the richness, the diversity, and the intractable otherness of the world outside their own consciousness? Can teachers recognize and affirm the humanity and integrity of their pupils, whose diverse lives may become the subject matter of the classroom? Answers to these questions will move education toward a solution of the dilemma implied in the handbook and its revisions. There, on the one hand, we find a single, monolithic core of Judeo-Christian values and, on the other, a fragmentation of cultures and values into balkanized, mutually unintelligible camps.

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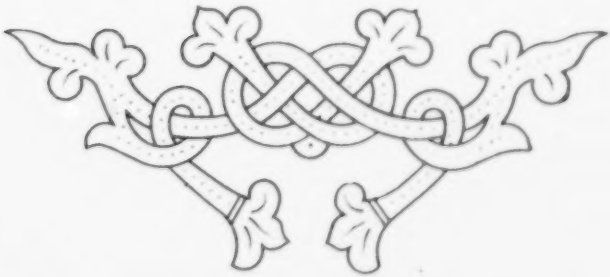
Book Review



Teaching the Introductory Course in Religious Studies: A Sourcebook

Edited by Mark Juergensmeyer. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991. xii + 310 pages. $34.95 ($24.95 to AAR/SBL and Scholars Press members.)

his well-planned collection comes out of the five-year Berkeley-Chicago-Harvard Program funded by the NEH, and reflects the years of experience and theoretical acuity both of the well-known scholars who served as consultants and speakers for the program, and of the many college teachers who participated in the workshops and shared their accumulated wisdom. The book would be a valuable resource for any department of undergraduate studies in religion, especially if the introductory course of the department is under revision. In fact, browsing through the book may make many department curriculum chairs want to begin a process of rethinking course structures in general.

The book is divided into four parts. The first explores the various types of introductory courses, whether "world religions," or "introduction to religion" or "introduction to religious studies." The second

addresses world religious "traditions," offering suggestions for means of approach and resources relevant to most of the major ones. These seventeen articles are written by experts in each area, but are geared toward the professor teaching an introductory level course who wants to incorporate elements from those traditions. This kind of assistance in choosing respectable and useful resources for traditions that one has not studied deeply is invaluable.

Section three is a "symposium," with seven scholar/teachers addressing the question "How I Teach the Introductory Course." If you've ever wondered how the three Smiths (Wilfred Cantwell, Jonathan Z., and Huston), Robert Bellah, Ninian Smart, Karen McCarthy Brown, or Mark Juergensmayer approach the basic course, here is your chance to learn. Even if you disagree with all of them about how best to do it (and that fact of diversity is one of the most outstanding and obvious themes of the book), the essays raise some very interesting questions that are worth working through. As Huston Smith says, "Ninian wants to apprise students of religion's power — its truth is secondary. . . . (My) priority is the opposite — for me religion's truth is uppermost" (Smith, "Another World to Live In," p. 209). Although most departments might not bring such diametrically opposed perspectives to a debate over the introductory course, these essays could serve as a great jumping-off point for a departmental discussion about goals and assumptions of the program as a whole.

The last section of the book is entitled "The Classroom Experience." Specific and helpful ideas on using audio-visual resources, representative course syllabi, and a bibliography of texts and other resources are included here, as well as a discussion of creative teaching ideas.

I do not know why the two articles by Susan Henking, on "Bringing

Those Absent into Religious Studies" and "Resources on Gender and Religion," are relegated to this section. It seems as though, once again, the inclusion of women and gender awareness was an afterthought, a matter for the classroom rather than for the most fundamental level of designing a course. Some articles that occur early in the book raise the possibility that women need to be considered along with men, but so rarely that it seems, that even in this fairly far-reaching rethinking of the introductory course, the issue of gender bias occurred only to a few of the contributors.

What is perhaps most interesting to think about is how the various approaches and perspectives described in the book might be influenced by each other. Perhaps such an exchange will occur in departments where faculty sit down together to discuss basic assumptions and goals of the curriculum. This book, or a selection from its thirty-six articles, would be a valuable starting place for such a discussion.

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CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning
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